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Minnie parting with Lord Randolph.—p. 101.

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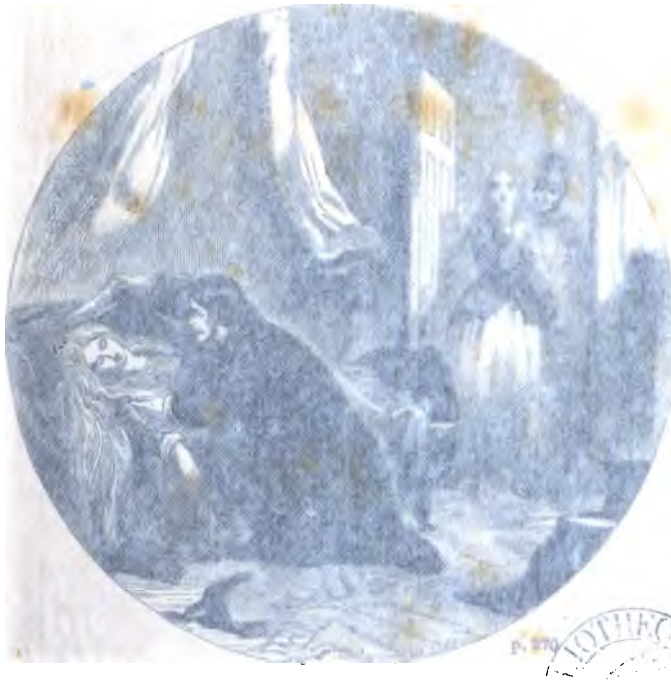

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BIBLIOTHECA BRITANNICA

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p. 270

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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MILES TREMENHERE.

"For such a love, O Rachel! years are few, and life is short!"—LOPEZ DE VEGA.

BY

ANNETTE MARIE MAILLARD.

AUTHORESS OF "THE COMPULSORY MARRIAGE," "ZINGRA THE GIPSY," ETC., ETC.

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MILES TREMENHERE.

CHAPTER I.

TREMENHERE did not return to dinner at six, as usual. He was not one of those careless husbands, who dine out unexpectedly with a friend, and leave their wives to wait in ignorance of their movements; so he sent a messenger immediately after Lady Dora had quitted the villa, and Minnie felt as if his absence *for the first time* gave her pleasure. It afforded her time to collect her resolution for meeting him with this concealment in her heart. The long hours passed sadly enough, for every thing around her seemed distasteful; the sunny noon of her heart was growing into twilight. Tremenhere generally returned early from his occasional parties. Ten o'clock came—a late hour for their quiet cottage—then half-past. Minnie grew restless—her conscience was not at rest; moreover, she was quite alone. The servant and the boy they kept—all their

household, had retired. Miles always had his key, when late. Minnie watched a short time longer, and then, going up-stairs to her dressing-room, partially undressed, enfolding herself in a long loose wrapper, of pale pink cashmere, in which she looked even more beautiful than when richly attired. Next, she unbound her long, fair hair, and, unweaving it, flung the rich mantle over her shoulders, which it completely covered; and thus, at perfect ease, she sat down in a large chair before the fire. She had been unused to much deep thought of late, and the events of the past two days had wearied her brain. Gradually the head fell listlessly back, a little on one side—the clasped hands, so perfect in form, supported it, an elbow resting on the arm of the chair —the lips were slightly parted, and a warm glow, like a sleeping infant's, ruddied her cheek, while the fair hair literally swept the ground. So soundly she slept, that Tremenhere entered the room unheard; he, too, had passed a day of deep meditation. Matter-of-fact persons may laugh at the idea; but to sensitive minds, coming events have often, as *avant courier*, presentiment. He had been thoroughly wretched all day; so much so, that without knowing any tangible cause of fear, he entered his home with a beating heart, as if he should find it vacant! How can we account for such sensations? They are purely spiritual. A deep sigh of joy trembled his lip, when he saw all he loved so well, so exclusively in safety, and sleeping calm as an angel might, rocked in a sailing cloud,—if angels ever sleep. He crept on tiptoe nearer; involuntarily his hands clasped as in prayer, as he

gazed upon her, then, fearful lest that magnetic influence of an eye watching over us, which makes us start up affrighted, with throbbing hearts, from our sleep, should awake her rudely, he bent slowly downwards on his knee, and looked upon her as on a saint, so pure, so unearthly was his love at that moment. Some moments he knelt thus, then, unclasping his hands, he raised the mass of sweeping hair gently, and pressed it to his lips; it was slightly perfumed, like new-mown grass. Insensibly his hands commenced turning fold over fold, tress over tress, till it grew to a rope of brightness in his hands, which they could just clasp; smiling, he twisted it, wondering at her prolonged sleep—suddenly a thought flashed through his brain, a demon's thought—jealousy; his fears of the day were parent to it. If she *ever* should love another! if those dreaming thoughts, which he then felt were his, should wander to another! What temptation had she yet known?—none. What men had she ever seen, to make her what so many were, even if only in idea—faithless? He should care but little for actual virtue, if the soul of it were gone; and as these maddening fancies crept through his mind, tighter and tighter he twisted the fair hair in his grasp.

"I could still her life with this," he muttered; "once round that small, fair infant neck, and I should save her from ever having a sinful wish. She is pure as one of those little things, whose faces are not veiled even by their own wings, as they say other angels are in heaven. O Minnie! so much I love

you thus, that I could find in my heart almost to kill you now, and bear the weight of that heavy sin, to save you from even knowing remorse." And in the agony of that moment of demoniacal temptation, he rose to his full height, while the livid face and brow were studded by agonized sweat-drops, his temples throbbed, he felt his mental power of reflection every moment becoming more condensed, and almost lost in impulse—impulse to commit murder, and, damning himself, save her! At that supreme moment a deep sigh struggled through her parted lips, the brow knit in mental pain, and Minnie awoke. Like a tree blasted at the roots, Tremenhere dropped on his knees, which gave way beneath his weight, and, burying his face in the terrified girl's lap, he sobbed convulsively—it was not weeping, but his heart's bursting, coming sorrow.

"Miles—dearest Miles—my own love!" cried she in terror, trying to raise his head—"What has occurred? Are you ill? Speak to me, Miles." She lifted up the face at last; it was pale as death, and on the fringes of the closed eyes hung unfalling tears: they were as the heat drops from the clouds before they burst asunder, sending forth sheet upon sheet of flame.

"Minnie!" he cried wildly, looking up at last, "I have dreamed a horrid waking dream while you slept: I was mad; for I thought if a day should ever come wherein you would not love me, but another——"

"Miles—Miles!" cried the trembling girl. "Do not think of so fearful a thing; 'tis tempting some demon to try you."

"*Try* me, Minnie! How so?" There was almost madness in his look.

"By giving you *real* trouble for this unchecked vision of impossible things."

"You are right, dearest," he said, rising more calmly, yet he shivered with emotion. "Heaven keep me from *real* doubt! I could not support it. Come, let us leave this room; it chills my heart, Minnie;" and he placed his arm around her—as he did so, and it came in contact with the living rope he had so madly twisted, a cold shudder passed over him.

"You are not well, dear Miles," she said, tenderly. "Let us leave this room; it seems filled with fancies and spirits—I grow superstitious." She tried to smile up in his face as usual, but the dimpling peace had left her—she was tacitly deceiving him.

The next day came with a bright sunshine, which imparted its light to Tremenhere's heart. He looked back upon his mad thoughts of the past night, half in laughter, half in horror, fully resolving for the future to check those wild, jealous, unfounded fears. Minnie could not rally, as he had done; she crept about that cottage like a troubled spirit, from one room to another, restless and unhappy. She was counting the moments until Lady Dora should arrive, and she could fling her arms round Miles's neck, and, telling him all, make him promise to be as ever towards Lord Randolph, who had in truth not insulted her in any way. The more she reflected, the less cause could she see for this secresy;

and but for her hasty promise to her cousin, certainly would have told him at once.

"Minnie, dearest," cried her husband, laughing; "what are you creeping about in that miserable manner for? Poor child! I startled you out of your sleep last night—you are quite pale."

She would have looked doubly so had she known his mad thoughts while she slept; as it was, she blushed painfully when he noticed her.

"I declare," he said, bending over her fondly, "you have been crying, dear child. What is grieving you?—have I unintentionally pained you?" And he kissed the bent brow.

"No, dearest Miles," she answered with quivering lips—she felt so nervous. "You are all kindness, all love. I——" and she was choking with her efforts to subdue her tears.

"My darling child—my own wife!" he said tenderly, raising her to his bosom, "do not give way to nervous depression—you can have no cause—I will not leave you so much alone; but you know, dearest, why it is—not choice, as heaven hears me—but necessity. Where will be our long-projected voyage to Gibraltar, for our good object, if I do not work? Every hour away from you is one of regret; and, as I am painting some grim portrait, I long to carry my model, easel, and all, to my quiet painting-room here, with my Minnie to hang over my shoulder."

She was silently weeping most bitter tears; they were standing near the table in the centre of the room.

"Come, come," he said, cheeringly, "you shall not give way to this—come into my studio; I want you to mix my colours. Silly child—silly child! to cry so much for nothing."

She was on the point of telling him all, and imploring pardon, when he turned his head aside, and the eye caught sight of a sheet of paper on the table. "Since when has Minnie," he said laughingly, as he took it in his hand, "turned copyist, and whose writing is this she has been imitating? I have seen it somewhere before —where have I seen it?" She was almost sinking to earth. It was a note which Lord Randolph had commenced; yet, in her speechless agony, she clung to his arm. There were only a few words—they ran thus:—

"Dear Tremenhere,—I am much annoyed at not finding you at home——"

"What does it mean, Minnie?" he cried, still smiling, and yet a strange, uncertain light bursting over him. "Surely this is not your writing? has any one been here? I will ring, and ask Bruce." He had his hand on the bell: she had slid from his arm unperceived to a seat. Before the bell sounded, the servant boy entered the room with a letter, which he handed to Tremenhere.

"Has any one called during my——"

Tremenhere said no more, his eye fell on the letter—one glance sufficed; for in his other hand he held the slip of paper.

"You may go," he said hastily to the boy. Without uttering another word he tore open the letter, and read, (we have said Lord Randolph had not much variety of

thought; this note was a copy, in the past tense, of the other one commenced.)

"Dear Tremenhere,—I was much annoyed at not finding you at home when I called to-day," (it had been posted the previous evening,) "as I particularly wished to see you. I know, under the emergency of the case, you will pardon my intrusion at your villa, the fair inhabitant of which did me the great honour of mistaking me for you, and, rushing in to meet you, brought me acquainted with the fairest face and form I ever beheld. 'Pon my life, Tremenhere, you are a lucky fellow, and a selfish one too, for possessing so fair an original. Surely you might bestow the copy on a friend, to create the loveliest Aurora ever seen! I am off to Uplands. As I *most* particularly wish to see you, come down without delay; I shall expect you to-morrow night, and you must stop a few days. Make my best compliments to your fair companion, and believe me to be, ever yours truly,

"RANDOLPH GRAY."

Miles read the letter through without a word uttered; it was only on his face his soul broke forth, and there it became, step by step, as he read on—surprise, grief, cold desolation—a man waking from a dream of home and love, to the rigid reality of a field of blood and battle. All these emotions, one by one, passed like shadows over his face, which grew paler with each. When he looked up, all had given place to a stern resolution, which sat on his troubled brow as he turned towards his wife. She, poor child, had covered her face with both hands, and was weeping bitterly. He laid a

cold unearthly hand on her arm—"You have deceived me," he uttered; and, with that almost inarticulate sound, his soul seemed to pass, so great was his agony. "Whom can we trust?" he whispered almost, as though speaking to himself. "She has deceived me!" and a sigh, almost a sob, burst from his bosom.

Our readers must picture to themselves the jealous temperament of this man—his intense, all-absorbing love for his wife—and then they may form some idea of his present agony; for this it was. His heart-strings seemed tightened as if a breath would snap them, like a lute too finely strung, over which we pass the fingers in dread.

"Miles!" she cried, clasping his arm, "hear me—hear all! I—I—I was afraid to tell you!" and the tears gushed from her eyes anew.

He released her grasp, and quietly re-seating her, but as some one he touched with repulsion, said, with his cold, stern eyes bent on her, "Afraid to tell me! Am I then so much an object of terror to you? I who——" The tone was unnatural, for his heart was bursting. "I," he continued, gradually raising his voice till it trembled with various emotions, "who have been gentle as a woman with you. I thought you so loving, so timid in your love, I feared to startle you by a rough tone—and you are afraid of me! All my love for you has only brought forth this—fear! Oh! when I said my heart was too old for yours, I was indeed right. I am not old—young still—but old at heart; and there, where I have given all, I meet only fear!" He passed his hand over his brow, as if his brain were burning

within. "Only fear—only fear!" he muttered; "and I, fool, thought she loved me!"

"So I do, Miles, my own dear husband," she cried, dropping on her knees, and holding her trembling hands up to him in supplication, while the tears rolled heavily down her upturned face; "I do love you, Miles—on my soul, I do, more than all the world beside; but I feared to tell you, for Dora frightened me so much about this man's visit."

"Lady Dora!" he cried—"when was she here?"

"Yesterday, Miles," sobbed she. "In my trouble, I forgot to tell you;" and, rising, she dropped on a seat.

"There was a time, Minnie," he said bitterly, looking at the girl as he stood with crossed arms before her, where she sat trembling, "you never *forgot* or *concealed* any thing from me. Times are sadly changed; or, perhaps, 'tis I who have been self-deceived all this long time, and read you as I hoped, not as you really are. In good truth, we know no one till we try them. 'Tis your nature, perhaps, child. You tried your young wings at home, and now you are giving me the advantage of your perfected flight. I have walked with you against others on this crooked road: I deserve to meet with a path where you turn round upon—myself!"

"Miles! for pity's sake," she articulated, almost suffocated by emotion, "have mercy on me; you are unjust and cruel!"

He strode the room with clenched hands, endeavouring to subdue the many passions in his breast. She rose like a spirit so noiselessly, and, gliding beside him,

grasped his arm again. "Forgive me, Miles," she whispered with quivering lips. Her touch roused all the indignation he was endeavouring to subdue.

"Forgive you!" he exclaimed, flinging her hand from him as if it burned him with its contact. "Forgive you!" and he stood before her with a wild look of passion. "You, who have so bitterly wounded and deceived me —and for whom? A man—the stranger of a day! Yet how do I know this? Perhaps you have met often; and now I think of it, he does not name in his note having been presented to you by your cousin. Fools!" he laughed—"poor fools! you have ill-managed your duplicity. I read you all—all—and so you will discover." So saying, he rushed from the room; and in a few minutes afterwards quitted the house. Poor Minnie could not stay him—she had fainted.

It would be difficult to say to what extremities he might not have proceeded, but a gentler thought came over the Parque who had raised this first sorrow. As Tremenhere strode onwards towards town, not looking to the right or left, but in deep thought, scarcely knowing whither to go, or what to do, a brougham passed rapidly—stopped—turned, and Lady Dora's voice said, "Mr. Tremenhere, may I speak one word to you?" Hers trembled — it ever did when addressing him: there was much warring in that girl's mind. She would have given worlds never to see his face again, as, by a concatenation of strange circumstances, she was forced to seek, or meet him. Her voice burst on his deep reverie, and startled him.

We have shewn that he had quitted home without any actual explanation from Minnie. As he bowed to Lady Dora, there was more than the ordinary constraint which marked his manner towards her on all occasions, she at once remarked it, and a gleam of truth passed through her mind. "May I speak to you?" she said, opening the door; for in these visits to Minnie, she only brought her groom with her, on whose discretion, as an old servant, she knew she could rely—not that she would condescend to ask silence of any one; but in this man she had confidence.

"If not of immediate moment, Lady Dora," he said bluntly, "I will beg to be excused the honour you propose to me, of a seat beside you. I have business of the utmost importance in town—meeting you on this road, I presume your drive will be extended to Chiswick; Mrs. Tremenhere is at home." He was moving away, having coldly raised his hat.

Lady Dora was sincerely pained at the trouble she read in those eyes, on that brow. "I must speak to you!" she cried hastily; "and, if you will not step in, permit me to accompany you in your walk a short distance—'tis of poor Minnie I would speak."

The "poor Minnie" touched a chord in his heart which was strung to harmony; it had been vibrating to the desire of his soul, to prove her innocent. He stopped:—

"I will not trouble your ladyship so much," he said, stepping in and closing the door. "Where shall I bid the man drive?" "Any where," she answered in some

confusion, leaning back in the corner. "I will not detain you very long—let it be slowly towards town; you were going there."

But he did not continue that route above half a mile. Lady Dora had a good heart, she really loved Minnie, and once you could, by her better sentiments, penetrate through her pride, she was a kind, gentle girl. Unhesitatingly she told Miles how every thing had occurred, every word his little wife had uttered, her horror at deceiving him, even tacitly; and *the fear* explained, was so kindly a one, lest he should fly into trouble, that his heart expanded with joy, and, involuntarily seizing Lady Dora's hand, he pressed it to his lips. "You are a messenger of peace and joy," he cried, looking in her face, which was very pale. Something like a tear dimmed his eye as the thought of his poor little wife—it was half love, and half regret.

How very slowly the horse, even at a good long trot, seemed to go, as the brougham turned once more towards his home! Lady Dora told him, that having vainly expected Lord Randolph the previous evening, that morning she sent to his residence, and learned he had gone off to Uplands. What she had to tell him about Minnie, she could not write, and when Miles met her, she was coming down to see him, and consult on what had best be done. It was decided in their short drive, that he should accept Lord Randolph's invitation, and start for Uplands at once, and himself explain all. Lady Dora stopped the brougham before arriving at the villa; nothing could have induced her to be present at the

meeting between the husband and wife: it was a scene she felt it would have pained her to witness, much as she desired their re-union. Miles did not urge it upon her, and as the carriage, with its pale occupant, turned away, he hastily entered his own home. Poor Minnie was lying on her couch, scarcely recovered from her swoon; when she heard his step, she started up in terror, and with eyes distended and trembling frame, awaited his coming.

The door opened, and, before she could articulate, his arms were about her, and we are not quite certain the tears which fell were all from her eyes, there is something so soothing, so heavenly in reconciliation—it is indeed the halcyon from above, descending with peaceful, unfluttering wings!

CHAPTER II.

As Minnie lay nestled to his heart, and once more, as of yore, smiling in his face, he told her of his intention of going to Uplands without delay, resolved upon confiding all to Lord Randolph, to prevent further mistakes. Minnie fully concurred in his opinion; and yet, she could not name this latter without a painful blush. It was the recollection of Miles's suspicion which called up this evidence against him.

"I will not have you even blush at his name," he whispered fondly; "though not in love, I shall be perhaps envious of the emotion which creates it. I am a jealous wretch, darling; I would have every flutter of your heart for myself alone." Much more he said in the sweet half-hour he gave to reconciliation, and sincere regret for his cruelty; and then, with a heart free from every cloud of doubt, he took an affectionate leave of her; twice, indeed, he returned, as though it were impossible to quit her, and at last, with a rude effort, tore himself away, determining to remain as short a time as possible. His carpet-bag was in a fly at the door—Minnie watching him step in from the window, when a

gentleman's cab drew hastily up, and Mr. Vellumy's voice exclaimed "Hallo, Tremenhere!"

Miles was leaning forward, to kiss his hand once more to his wife. The appellation startled him not a little. He turned hastily round. A frown crossed over his brow.

"Gway told me last night," said the other, in reply to his cool "How d'ye do," "that you would be coming down to-day, and, as I am returning, I thought we might go down together. I see you have your carpet-bag, so of course you are off there—lucky I just caught you—here, step into my cab, and send away your fellow; I'll spin you to the railroad in no time."

All this looked fair and above board. It was not written on Vellumy's brow, that he had a correct list of all the trains in his pocket; he had been for half an hour watching on the road, expecting what had happened, namely—the departure from home of Tremenhere.

"You're very good," answered he, still distantly; "but it is scarcely worth while changing for so short a distance."

"Pawdon me," lisped Vellumy. "'Tis a long way; come, do be sociable, I hate twawelling alone."

"He's a good-natured fool," thought Miles; "why refuse? conciliation is my object, so here goes;" and, making some sort of apology for his abruptness at first, he stepped out of the fly into the cab, and casting a long look at the curtain, behind which he saw Minnie's face, they drove away, and arrived without accident at

London bridge station—just caught the train—and started for Uplands. We should mention that Vellumy stopped for an instant at his club—threw the reins to Tremenhere—and in less than five minutes was again by his side.

Tremenhere was in unusually good spirits; he felt almost mirthful. He was going to place his beloved wife on a pedestal whence no slander could shake her; henceforth he was resolved openly to speak of her; he had learned the evil attending concealment. His heart was full of sweet thoughts of her; he determined, however, to speak first to Lord Randolph, and then let him present him, in his new character of Benedick, to his friends.

"Do you know," he asked, starting from a reverie, "why Lord Randolph desires my company so especially at Uplands?"

"Cannot say," answered Vellumy, smiling, "unless it be to call your palette into requisition, to pourtway the beauties of his ladye-love."

"Lady Dora Vaughan?" asked the other in surprise. "I thought she had quitted Up—. Indeed, I *know* she has," he added hastily; "I saw her to-day."

"Not Lady Dowa," answered Vellumy, with a knowing smile. Some one else he is vewy much in love with, a——" Up to the present moment he had been talking at random, just to divert Tremenhere's ideas from any thing singular in the summons the other had received. Some thread from the Parque's weaving surely, tangled round his shallow mind at this juncture, and

drew him on, without thinking on his part, to add, by way of "fun:" "I don't know that I ought to tell you" —this was said confidentially—"but Gwray is deucedly in love with some married woman, qwite a beauty, I hear."

"Indeed!" was the thoughtful, half painful reply, yet he could not tell where this information galled him.

"Oh yes!" continued the confidential Vellumy; "it is a recent affair—Gwray is tewibly in love," he glanced smilingly at the thoughtful Tremenhere.

"Do you know her?" asked he.

"No, he's newer let me see her; it is quite a romantic affair, of wecent date."

"Married, you say?" inquired Tremenhere, trembling he scarcely knew why. "Then of course the passion is a hopeless one?"

"What an innocent you would make me think you!" laughed Vellumy. "Her husband, I hear, is a jealous cuwmudgeon; she's afwaid of her life of him, but, fwom all I hear, I should certainly say she loved Gwray, and not a little."

A cold chill passed through the other's frame, then suddenly recalling his cruel suspicions of Minnie, which had been so completely obliterated from his mind, he shook off the incubus hanging round his heart, and said mentally, "I am again playing the madman! There are thousands of married women with whom Lord Randolph is acquainted." And, resolved to banish these thoughts, he started a totally different subject, and conversing indifferently they arrived at the end of their

journey. They found their host absent, however; he and some friends were out shooting, so a servant said, but would of course return for dinner. Tremenhere took possession of the room awarded him, and afterwards he and Vellumy amused themselves with billiards for an hour or two. Lord Randolph was one of the most oblivious personages in the world; he totally forgot, in the turmoil of other thoughts, that Marmaduke Burton had on a previous occasion declined meeting Tremenhere; great, then, was the unpleasing surprise of both, when Lord Randolph entered in shooting trim, accompanied by the latter. Tremenhere's brow flushed with pride as Lord Randolph said, slightly presenting them, "I suppose you two have met before?"

Burton looked pale and uncomfortable; Tremenhere said boldly, "We have met often."

Their host looked up at the tone, and, bursting into a reckless, good-tempered laugh, said, turning round on one heel, "Egad, now I recollect! Burton, you fought shy of Tremenhere last time he was here, and shirked a meeting. Come, I'll be sworn you've quarrelled about some woman; you must oblige *me*, and make it up: this I intend to be a day of peace-making;" and he gave a peculiar look at Vellumy, who responded to it in an equally significant manner. All this by-play was unnoticed by Miles, who, in answer to Lord Randolph, said, "Your lordship is quite right; that gentleman and I have quarrelled about a woman, yet not quite as you suppose, possibly."

"'Pon my life," answered their host more seriously, "I'm a thoughtless, forgetful fellow, or I ought

to have called to mind, Burton, that when you and Tremenhere were down here together the other day, you quitted to avoid him. This should convince you, Tremenhere, that Burton bears no animosity towards you; come, oblige me: be friends, forget old grievances."

"Animosity! and forgetfulness!" cried Tremenhere. Then, lowering his tone, he added coldly, "Lord Randolph, there are persons with whom estrangement is more consonant to our feelings than friendship; but his presence—I mean the presence of my worthy cousin——"

"Cousin!" exclaimed their host and Vellumy in a breath.

"I disclaim it!" cried Burton, trying to appear calm; "that is, except indirectly—left-handed."

"Man!" said Tremenhere, energetically making an involuntary step towards him. The other two made a movement to prevent any collision; but Tremenhere stopped as Burton shrunk back. "I am a fool," he said, "to forget my noble part—patience. Pardon me, Lord Randolph; whilst I am in your house as guest, I will no more so offend—I will conduct myself as if such a person as that man had never existed. When I proclaim our relationship again, he shall tremble more than he does even now—look at him!" And, turning contemptuously away, he quietly interrupted an awkward apology which their host was commencing, by—"Has your lordship had good sport to-day? We artists lose these more wholesome pleasures, amidst our palettes and pencils."

Lord Randolph was well pleased at the turn affairs

had taken: he had not brains enough to carry out two things at once. All his ideas were now fixed upon one great achievement, foreign to this. Burton seemed so awkwardly ill at ease, that Tremenhere could almost have found it in his heart to pity him. After the first feeling of annoyance occasioned by his presence, he felt gratified, as he would be a witness of the public justice he purposed doing Minnie; and, in this mood, he quickly recovered his equanimity of temper; and, when he took his place at the dinner-table, Lord Randolph was fain to admit, even with the then prejudice against him, that certainly honest uprightness sat upon his brow, and lightness of conscience in his easy gaiety; whereas Burton looked pale, discontented, and gloomy. Tremenhere took not the slightest notice of him; there was no sneer, no avoidance, but a quiet obliviousness of his existence, especially annoying. Their host was in high spirits, and, with the well-bred ease of a perfect gentleman, put all his guests, as far as he could, on that pleasant footing. Several peculiar looks passed between Vellumy and himself, more especially after the former's return to table, whence he had been summoned by Lord Randolph's valet.

"Vellumy," he cried, laughing, "you look as if you had seen a ghost; 'pon my life you're pale."

"Am I?" responded the other in the same tone; "I have, however, seen no ghost, but a spirit of grace and beauty."

"Where?" asked the others, in a breath.

"Ask Randolph," said Vellumy; "I never tell tales out of school."

"Pshaw!" answered the host, giving a half-frowning look at his friend, "there's not a living woman here, that I ever see, now the women folk and their maids have departed."

"Talking of that," said Burton, "when do you become one apart from us—a respectable married man?"

"Probably never," was the decided reply. "Lady Dora frowns upon my suit; and——"

"You have little pressed it of late," hazarded some one.

"I never saw two less like lovers than you were, down here the other day."

"By George, no!" cried Burton; "you were always running up to town—there must be some magnet there, I fear. Lady Dora should look to it."

Vellumy laughed aloud.

"Oh, Vel is in the secret!" exclaimed the first speaker. "Tell us, is she dark or fair?—fair for a guinea! for this morning at breakfast he was raving about golden hair, and cheeks blushing like the inside of a sea-shell, which the amorous sea bathes in tears."

"Poetically described," said Lord Randolph, colouring slightly; and almost inadvertently his eye rested on Tremenhere, who was pale and silent. "I shall, probabably, *never* marry," continued he; "that is, not till I grow a cranky old bachelor."

"You have changed," said Tremenhere in rather a low tone, feeling it necessary to say something; "and

not for the better, I think. If people must marry, why, let them do it in youth—that is, not extreme youth, but not with too much disparity—a year or two on the man's side."

"Only *that!*" exclaimed Burton sarcastically, half addressing Tremenhere, who looked him full in the face, but made no reply; the blood, however, painfully rose to his brow. The remark was not lost where he intended it to tell.

"The misfortune is," said one of the guests, "that we men do not gain wisdom with age—our wise teeth are the first to decay and desert us. We forget how many years have gone over our heads; and at sixty expect some lovely girl of twenty to love us for ourselves alone."

"A grave error," answered Tremenhere, laughing. He was resolved, if possible, to chase painful thought, and the cold, unfounded suspicions gathering round his heart. "For an old man, marrying a young girl, generally becomes like a hoop in a child's hands; which it trundles before it whither it will, giving it hard knocks at every step!"

"Bravo!" cried several.

"It is not always thus," said their host, laughing. "Some old fellows weary their young wives to death; these always remind me of a punishment I have read of somewhere, where a living person was chained to a corpse till death came—some old men are brutes."

"I'd poison such a one!" exclaimed one man, laughing.

"I know such a being now," responded Lord Randolph, "with his hair dyed a purple black, idem whiskers, and one of our celebrated dentists is guilty of affording him the means of mastication, and life."

"If I were his wife," said Tremenhere, "I'd take away his teeth, and starve him! 'Twould be a decay of nature, nothing to affect the conscience!"

Some more jests were passed on this subject; and when silence was a little restored, Burton asked, "But Vellumy has not yet accounted for the fair spirit he spoke of—where is she?"

"In the picture gallery," answered Lord Randolph, hastily. "Tremenhere, you are such a deucedly lazy fellow, that, till you send me your 'Aurora,' I have gladdened my eyes with a Venus; you must give me your opinion of her by candle-light. Vellumy loses himself in ecstasy before her.

"By whom is she?" asked Tremenhere.

"Gad I forget! some young aspirant. I have a fancy of my own, to bring forward unknown genius and beauty."

Here again he looked at Vellumy, and again a cloud passed over Tremenhere's heart. Much more was said on various subjects. The cloth was removed—the wine circulated freely. Vellumy whispered Tremenhere, "Come along; leave those fellows drinking; let's go and have a quiet hit at billiards."

Both rose. "Where are you off to?" exclaimed Lord Randolph; "I'll have no shirking, Vel. You and Tremenhere remain—we'll all go shortly."

"You can join us," answered Vellumy; "we're going to see the Venus first," and he moved to the door.

"I'll be shot if you do!" cried their host springing towards, and locking it.

"That's right!" cried several; "keep them in! That's not fair to leave so soon."

"Done, my boy!" exclaimed Vellumy, rushing to another—a side one. "Come along, Tremenhere; we can find our way through this passage."

"Try, try!" shouted Lord Randolph after them; "the doors are locked that way, you must come back."

"This way, Tremenhere," called Vellumy, running on before; "up this side passage, and the private stair, to Gway's own rooms; I know the way, come along!"

They had both been drinking rather freely, and in the cup Tremenhere had forgotten all annoyance.

CHAPTER III.

Up the narrow stair they hurried laughing, then down a passage, at the further end of which was a door.

"Gway forgot this," laughed the conductor; "this leads to the gwallery."

Apparently Gray had not forgotten it; for, for some unexplained purpose, it was fastened.

"Confound it!" exclaimed the speaker; "what can he have locked up all these doors for? Try that one on your left; that leads to his own apawtments."

"Looked, too," said Tremenhere, after trying it.

"I won't be bweaten!" cried Vellumy; "stwop a moment. I'll run down the pwassage, and gwet the keys out of the other doors; they'll most likely opwen this;" and back he ran. Tremenhere stood looking after him.

"Here," he called out, though under his breath, from the end of the passage; "here's a key—twy it;" and he flung it down the carpeted corridor. "I'll go look for mwore."

Tremenhere raised the key and applied it to the lock, which yielded at once; he entered unhesitatingly, with that freedom natural to a bachelor-house, and found himself in a small antechamber leading to Lord Randolph's own rooms; for an instant he stood irresolute. Which way turn? the picture-gallery was the object of

his search. There were two doors in this room—one opposite the one by which he had entered; towards this he moved, and, gently turning the handle, found himself at the entrance of a small, but elegantly-furnished sitting-room. There were no lights, except from the fire, which threw a wide, cheerful blaze over all. A sofa was drawn close to it, and on this sat a lady, leaning half over the arm of it; her back was turned to the door, which had opened noiselessly. The light was not uncertain, and it threw its fullest blaze on that fair form—and that fair form was Minnie's!

Tremenhere stood still—a statue-like stillness. Life seemed fading away in horror. He felt drunk for a moment with suffering; then vision, thought—all cleared away into perfect sobriety, and he strode silently towards her. She started, and, dropping her book, uttered a cry of surprise, and, by an involuntary feeling of sudden alarm, shrunk back; then, seeing who it was, exclaimed in joy, if he could so have read it,—

"Oh, Miles, is that you? but you startled me, indeed, standing like a ghost, there. You look as if you did not expect me!"

"You here—you here!" he muttered with cold lips. "In these rooms! and why here at all?" And he held his hands before him to keep her back.

"Miles," she cried, still advancing; and though the face grew pale with some sudden fear of untimely birth, for it was so unexpected, yet the brow was clear and pure to all but a jealous man. "You know wherefore I am here; think—you must be mad!"

"Mad!" he echoed, staring wildly; "I must be mad, or dreaming!—you were locked in, and in *these* rooms."

"Where am I?" she cried, looking hurriedly round.

"Do you not know," he articulated beneath his breath, "or are you deceiving me? These are Lord Randolph Gray's private apartments."

"His!" she whispered, dropping on a seat; "I thought they were yours." Poor girl! her limbs tottered beneath her weight.

"You will drive me mad," he cried, seizing her trembling hands; "tell me, in Heaven's name—tell me how you came here, and why?"

"I came," she ejaculated half in surprise and half in fear, "because you sent for me; but why am I in these rooms, why not in yours?" She did not yet understand his suspicions; her fears arose from his strange excitement; she began to fear for his reason, thinking that he had sent for her.

"Woman!" he cried in agony, wringing her cold hands, "I never called you hither, and this you must know." She could not speak, but sat silently staring at him, her eyes distended with terror. "Speak—speak truth, if you *dare*—and tell me why you are here? and how? for I am nearly mad; do you not see it, woman? I conjure you, speak."

"Speak you!" she whispered, "and tell me your hidden meaning; you affright me with these spirit thoughts. Embody them, Miles; for I dare not believe my heart's fear."

"Speak them!" he exclaimed, "do they need speech? No! your guilty soul has uttered them to your terror-stricken frame; you have done, and now you shudder at your own act. Woman, I am doubly deceived, deceived when this day I took you to my loving heart, deceived when I was lured from my home that you might come hither in secret, but I will have revenge, where revenge may be taken." And casting her hands from him, which he had held grasped in his, he sprung towards the door, but like lightning she was before him, and placing her slight form, now nerved by resolution against it, she said, "Miles, I bore much this day patiently, for I had been guilty of concealment, though done for a worthy purpose; but now, that my soul is clear of any wilful sin against you, in the sight of Heaven, I *demand* that you should hear me."

"Speak," he said coldly folding his arms, "my revenge can wait."

"When," she articulated faintly, for the nerve of a moment had passed away—"when you left me to-day, an hour elapsed in thoughts of you, all you Miles, and joy—that deep joy which reconciliation brings. I was aroused from this dream of peace and rest, after my recent sorrow, by a messenger who came, he said, with a letter from you, which you had given him on starting, and this letter bade me at once come to Uplands to rejoin you, placing myself under the care of this messenger; you had a project in view for our mutual happiness, and my presence was necessary; so, dear Miles, I did not delay a moment,"—here the long restrained tears over-

flowed her eyes at the calling of that gentle word on her lip—"but fearlessly quitted home, knowing your judgment must be best in all things for my benefit, I could not err in following your guidance," her full eye looked all its love on him as she spoke.

"The letter," he said hoarsely, holding out a hand; he durst not take her, as he longed to do, to his heart, without this proof.

"Are *you* mad, or am *I?*" exclaimed the affrighted girl—his calmness awed her. "I have burned that letter, you know you bade me do so."

"By heavens!" he laughed wildly, "your cold-hearted assurance proves you the most consummate deceiver in the world. Girl—woman—demon! I *never* bade you come—I never wrote to you; and you *know* I did not, but your paramour knew me safe here; and in safety lodged you here also. By heaven it was a bold, daring game, worthy a better cause!" How often, in our bitterest or most serious moments, some passage either ludicrous, or irreverent, will cross our minds; through his flitted the words of Iago,—

"She did deceive her father, marrying you!"

"Yes," he continued, following the thought, "she deceived them all, cleverly and calmly; and what wonder I should follow?"

"Oh!" cried Minnie, dropping on her knees and looking upwards; "if spirits in pain may summon their kindred from heaven, oh! my own dear mother, look on

your orphan, and pity her; pray for her, mother dear—pray for her!" and, covering her face with her hands, she wept bitterly. There is not in the regions of darkness a blacker demon than jealousy; it brands all—perverts all. There was a time when a tear from Minnie would have torn his soul. Now he looked on, almost exultingly; he thought she was sorrowing for another.

"Tremenhere, Tremenhere, open the door!" exclaimed Lord Randolph without, agitatedly—he heard a woman in tears. "For heaven's sake open the door, I will explain all!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Miles in a deep tone of satisfaction, yet it seemed as a groan, "here is something tangible to deal with." And without casting a look on his sobbing wife, who was bowed to earth, he hastily unfastened the door, which she had locked to prevent Miles's egress. "Come in, my lord," he said, perfectly calm, "and witness your day's worthy occupation! Look up, woman; here is one for whom you have cast me off! You, my lord, to-day, reign master of that fickle heart; and another—and another—and another, to-morrow!" and he strode contemptuously to the fireplace; but the hands were clenched in agony, which he would let no one witness.

"Come in, Vellumy!" cried Lord Randolph, whose voice trembled. He had created a storm which was mastering him.

"Let no one else in!" shouted Miles, turning round, all his forced calm giving way to intense passion. "Or, yes," he added, springing to the door and forcing it wide

open from Vellumy's grasp, who strove to close it. "Come in, one, all—all—Burton too—come, glory, triumph over the proud man biting the bitter dust of betrayed trust."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed his host, pale with agitation. "Hear me, Tremenhere; I will explain all. Vellumy knows all—we will explain."

As they entered Minnie crept to her feet, and silently dropping on the sofa, sat watching all with a bewildered look of extreme terror; her shaken mind could not comprehend it.

"I am ready to hear all you may have to say, gentlemen," Miles said coldly, and sarcastically; "you will, however, permit me to hold my own opinions, and act upon them, as a man so much injured should."

"Tell him, my lord," whispered Minnie, who had silently crept to Lord Randolph's side, and grasped his arm—"tell him; for *you* must know how I came here, if, indeed, he is not mad, as I feared, but truly in ignorance."

Tremenhere stood as one doubtful whether to drag her from the arm she energetically grasped, or else kill her as she stood there; assuredly there was murder in the thought of that ungoverned, erring, but most devoted heart. He passed his hand over his brow, and dashed aside the cold drops of suspense and doubt.

"Pray, calm yourself, madam," said Lord Randolph, gently laying his hand on her trembling one; "I will explain all. Indeed, I never expected matters to take so biased a turn as this." She shrunk back from the

touch of his hand. Her terror assumed so many forms, she scarcely knew where to find the end of that tangled web to unravel it. Vellumy looked even more alarmed than Lord Randolph; besides which, for the first time, he looked upon Minnie, and perhaps she never had appeared more beautiful than in that moment of anxiety and suffering. Instinctively he drew near to the girl, who sat like one awakened from a fearful dream, gazing wildly from one to the other, and incapable of the least exertion; her very arms hung nerveless, yet essaying to grasp the sofa for support.

Vellumy whispered gently, "Don't *cwy*; we will make it all *wight*—G*way* has brought you here for that purpose." But she stared wildly at him, not hearing or understanding his meaning. Meanwhile, Lord Randolph, who really had done all with a good intention, gained energy from the uprightness of his conscience, and said calmly—

"Now hear me, Tremenhere; I may possibly offend you by my interference, but my object in bringing that most unfortunate, most injured girl here, has been——"

"Stop, my lord!" cried Miles, recovering his dignity, and soothing down his passion like a smouldering fire, more concentrated and intense in that apparent calm. "Though lost to all shame—though lost to me and my love, permit me still to claim a certain respect for the name she still bears—you forget that *girl* is my wife—Mrs. Tremenhere!"

"Your *wife!*" exclaimed both the other men in a voice. "Your wife! Good heavens! can this be?"

"True!" answered Miles, coldly. "I forgot this was unknown to you—that is, *through me.* I came hither to-day, to leave you no longer in ignorance of my exact position, as you had done my wife the honour of a visit."

"Merciful heavens!" cried Lord Randolph, agitatedly. "If this be indeed the case, I have been led into a grievous, but not irretrievable, error. Is this lady truly your wife?"

"As truly as a twice-told ceremony can make her," answered the other, with a cold, doubting smile. "Is your lordship indeed in ignorance of this fact? and does the responsibility of your crime alarm you? Fear not—it is not by *law* I shall seek redress when I demand it. There may be honour—if you know that thing more than by name—but there will be no laws to satisfy."

Lord Randolph was pacing the room, uncertain how to explain himself;—Vellumy looked thunderstruck.

"What!" continued Miles, in the same tone of bitterness; "did you think that was a frail creature, you were only making frailer still? that you were only deceiving a deceiver? giving to the giver his own again? I tell you, no; the creature was to me as the light of heaven—pure, sunny, gladdening all!—a gift of God to cheer me on my pilgrimage! Do you think I could look up to heaven, and bless it for its light, when I had condemned a soul like hers to crime and darkness?—to walk with me onward to the judgment-seat, and there kneel down and condemn me to hell, for the wrong I had done her? I tell you no, my lord; she *was* my

own loved, virtuous *wife—once!*" And the stern man's voice trembled with emotion.

"And, by heavens, Tremenhere! that *still* for me, or any thought of mine. Give me your hand: forgive me—I have been led to wrong you deeply; I rejoice in being able once again to call you friend. I respect—I pity you; for some, to me unknown, unhappy circumstances, must have made you condemn a being like that to the shade of a suspicion. Mrs. Tremenhere," he added, approaching her, as Miles drew coldly back from the proffered hand, "forgive me the involuntary pain I have caused you, but plead for me to Tremenhere; he cannot resist you!"

Minnie stared like one idiotic; she was wounded too deeply; her native delicacy was sullied by these cruel suspicions.

"Tell Miles all," she articulated, in a low tone—"I cannot speak to him; tell him all—pray, do!" And her voice was choked with tears.

"You *must* hear me, Tremenhere!" he cried.

"*Must!*" laughed the other incredulously. "May I ask is this an impromptu, or a part of a well-arranged whole? I ask a simple question—favour me with a simple reply, my lord. How came Mrs. Tremenhere in this apartment, where I by accident found her? Words will not do—I ask proofs!"

"Will not my pledged and sacred honour suffice?"

"Some men deem it a duty, where a lady's reputation is concerned, to clear her from suspicion at any price."

"By heavens! you are blunt, sir," answered Lord

Randolph haughtily; "and but that a well-meant act of mine, has caused this scene—this mistake—I should leave you to seek your remedy where and how you would; but I am resolved to state all, and then leave you to be just, if just you can be in your present state."

He then proceeded to relate the scheme arranged between Vellumy and himself, believing Minnie wronged by Tremenhere—a scheme to bring her down, and call upon Miles's better feelings to do her justice. What she had told her husband was perfectly true. When Vellumy entered the club, on their way to the railroad, it was to despatch a trusty person, to whom the letter had been confided, which lured Minnie unsuspecting from home. We have seen how Vellumy's cab had been in waiting with its master, to secure the positive departure of Miles. Vellumy had a great talent—(for one it is, though dangerous in the extreme)—an extraordinary power of copying handwriting. He wrote a letter so exactly like Miles's, that even Minnie was deceived. It ran thus (they were ignorant of her name, it will be remembered)—

"Dearest Love—I have just received a letter at my club, on my way to the station, which contains something of so much importance to our future welfare, that I earnestly desire you should follow me to Uplands. Place yourself unfearing under the care of the trusty bearer, and he will bring you safe to your

"MILES.

"Burn this; I will explain all when we meet."

This letter might have misled a more experienced person than poor Minnie; what could she suspect? Miles's word was law, unquestioned; without hesitating one moment, she quitted home with the messenger, who was none other than Lord Randolph's valet, one he could securely confide in. The plan for Tremenhere to discover her, was all arranged beforehand; but, most unfortunately, the well-intentioned plotters were quite ignorant of Miles's jealous disposition, as also of the scene of that morning on his lordship's account; and, to crown all, there was no letter forthcoming in proof. Vellumy, by the latter's desire, quitted the room to keep the guests below in good temper; he was, like his friend, a well-meaning man, but not a gifted one, by wisdom. Of all the persons below, he selected Burton for his confident, to whom he might unburthen his overcharged bosom. Secrets were of leaden weight with him. This man listened with avidity and delight to the strange tale, but made no like confidence himself. What he knew about it, remained in his own breast; but he, who before chid his fate for bringing him in contact with his cousin, now rejoiced in it: these revelations raised a host of ideas in his mind, which he promised himself not to lose sight of.

All these circumstances, as we have related them, were laid before Tremenhere, and though he allowed himself at last to be convinced of Minnie's truth, yet there was a power within him stronger than his own will. It was an offspring of nature—wild and ungovernable jealousy: it ran like a muddy current through every vein, and though he took Minnie once

again in love and reconciliation to his heart, and shook Lord Randolph's hand in sincerity of gratitude for the manly wish which prompted this ill-advised act of kindness to Minnie, still the demon shook his heart when he saw her, in the warmth of her generous, guileless heart, shake Lord Randolph gratefully by the hand, and, looking up in his face, bid "Heaven bless him;" for he felt no man could forget that face, that look, and he dreaded lest what was not, might be engendered by that beauty and grace of nature, which had driven even his stern heart almost to madness; and the restless demon whispered, "I would you had seen the letter," but letter, Vellumy, Burton, Lord Randolph—all, were forgotten and forgiven, when he held his Minnie once again to his heart, and their host descended to make some plausible excuse for his non-appearance again.

Early next morning he and Minnie returned to town, and Burton, too, quitted Uplands.

"That fool Dalby made a confounded mistake," said Lord Randolph to his crony, Vellumy, next day; "but it has all turned out most fortunately. What an exquisite creature Mrs. Tremenhere is! Ten thousand times handsomer even than her cousin, Lady Dora," (for Miles had related all, to leave no further doubt or suspicion about Minnie.)

"*B*wootiful!" responded Vellumy, "and such a sweet *l*woving woman! I hope T*w*emenhere will *tw*eat her well, he's so d*w*eucedly jealous!"

And thus terminated a good intention. If it went where such too often are said to go, it left its germ in earth to bud and blossom.

CHAPTER IV.

If Lord Randolph had possessed as good sense as he had kindness of heart, even yet all might have passed into oblivion; but he was that *rara avis* of fashionable life—a moral man; that is, one too much so, to attempt the seduction of a friend's wife. Minnie became sacred to him from the moment he shook Tremenhere's hand in reconciliation; him, he liked, and still more, his fair little wife. It was, then, not to be wondered at if he claimed the privilege of an old friend, and made frequent calls at the villa near Chiswick. It would have been much more wisely done to have remained away; but, in conscious rectitude, we often are guilty of very compromising acts, viewed by prejudiced or evil minds. Tremenhere's pride forbade any observations to Minnie, who received him with pleasure, looking upon him in two lights—both as her husband's friend, and Lady Dora's suitor, for such he still was; and as she occasionally, but not very frequently called, they met at the villa. Still there was—burned as it were into Miles's brain—the memory of all Vellumy had said that fatal day about his friend's love for a married woman—fair, too; in all, answering Minnie's description. And,

worse than all, there was that unfortunate letter which Vellumy had written, and, for self-security, bade her burn immediately. All these things combined were ever floating before Tremenhere's brain; and, to complete the impression, Lord Randolph was constantly urging him to finish the "Aurora," by giving her a worthy representative in the face of his fair, young, sylph-like wife.

In the most well-meaning manner, this man was ever doing something to keep alive the other's suspicions. He was no longer in ignorance of Tremenhere's position regarding Marmaduke Burton; and, as a sincere friend and generous-hearted man, pressed his purse upon Miles, to proceed at once to Gibraltar, and prosecute all possible research. It need scarcely be said, that he had dropped all acquaintance with Marmaduke, which created a double hatred and desire of revenge on his part, towards his cousin and his young wife.

When Lord Randolph made the generous offer of his purse, he concluded by saying, naturally and without thought of harm—

"You could leave Mrs. Tremenhere with her aunt, Lady Ripley; I will undertake to arrange that. Or, I know my own good, kind one, Lady Lysson, would most gladly offer her a home during your absence."

Tremenhere was painting at the moment the other said this; he flushed deeply, then dropping a pencil, stooped to pick it up, and thus partly covered his confusion.

"I cannot be sufficiently grateful," he answered;

"but—" there was an almost imperceptible tone of sarcasm in his voice; "but I never have been parted from my wife, Lord Randolph; and I do not think she would desire or like it—that is, I hope not." And he fixed his eye for a moment on the other's face, who saw nothing, and consequently more than once urged the subject upon Miles, who grew at last almost rude, beyond his power of control.

"Tremenhere's out of temper to-day," said the visiter to himself. "I'm sure it would be the best thing he could do, and a duty, to place that sweet wife of his, in her proper sphere; I'll be at him again."

All these groundless suspicions wore on his really noble nature, every thing giving way before them; even the sacred hope which once had been so dear to him, the re-establishing his mother's fame, became a blank. He cared for nothing, except to watch and verify his doubts; he became weary, feverish, ill, and an enigma to all! almost too—oh, worse than all—a terror to poor Minnie, who was lost in wonder and perplexity. If she quitted the room for a longer time than was pleasing to him, he stole from his easel, and listened; if he saw her writing, he could not rest till the letter was placed in his hands, even the book on which she had written it was examined, to trace whether the blotting-paper had kept the words confided to it; and, when all had been done with feverish haste, the man sat down, and hated himself for his meanness, and seeking out Minnie, drew her to his heart, as if he would keep her ever there, and

almost wept over her in penitence and love; for never a man loved more madly or fatally for the peace of both.

He would start from some mad dream of desertion, and, stilling his very heart to listen, find her sleeping purely and calmly as an infant beside him. Such a state could not last; Minnie, every one noticed it, but few—or better said, none—guessed the cause, so well did he veil his thoughts.

We have spoken little of Minnie's late home, but there was little to interest the reader in that tranquil abode, —tranquil, except when Dorcas sought to recall Minnie there, and to their hearts; this might have been accomplished long before the present time of which we write, had there not been extraneous influence to keep alive the feeling against her. Marmaduke Burton was not only a visiter, but a constant correspondent, when absent, of Juvenal's; nothing was left undone which could widen the breach, and it was with the "deepest regret," he said, that he felt compelled, by a sacred duty, to inform Juvenal, as her uncle, that the once pure Minnie was deceiving her husband, as she had all of them.

Alas! the girl who flies her home, leaves an unanswerable argument against her, when the world afterwards adds sin, shame, or a levity to her charge; however innocent she may be, the "once" is a precedent for all.

Dorcas, and even poor Mrs. Gillett, loudly exclaimed against this; the former refused positively to meet or sit in company with Burton; Sylvia shook her head, and looked more sinister than ever, as she said, "It might very likely be; she never expected any thing better from her

marriage with such a man; she had indeed raised a barrier between them," and chapters more to the same effect. Poor Dorcas cried bitterly, and reproached herself for her supineness in the first instant, in not vigorously opposing Minnie's incarceration. She knew the girl better than any, and knew nothing would have tempted her honest nature to duplicity, had she not been driven half frantic by wrong accusations, and suspicion of her truth. In her trouble, Dorcas sought her only comforter, Mr. Skaife, and urged him so anxiously to see her beloved niece, that he quitted Yorkshire for town; before he arrived, sorrow was gathering fast over both those he felt so much interested about.

Our readers will recall to mind, that Mary Burns had obtained teaching, by which she principally supported her mother; for she felt a delicacy in receiving succour from Tremenhere, however generously offered. Of late he seldom quitted home, never except when absolutely forced to do so, and generally he so arranged it, to be driven in by Lord Randolph; thus only could he feel secure. One thing we forgot to mention sooner, that nothing was wanting to urge a jealous man to madness; he was in the constant habit of receiving anonymous letters, those vile arms of coward strength; these were written, so bearing upon acts of actual occurrence, that, though he read and flung them into the fire, still they left an unerring shaft behind, piercing his heart with doubt, for in every one there was but the one name registered, which was eating into his soul—Lord Randolph's. He was truly a man fighting with shadows; he feared every thing,

seeing nothing. It was a state of irritability which could not last much longer. He was borne to earth with the tortures of his mind; and Minnie crept, like the ghost of herself, through those almost silent rooms—once all light and happiness.

It must not be supposed that Marmaduke Burton, who was working under-ground like some vermin, did it for mere revenge, or wanton wickedness; no, he was impelled to it by fear; he knew in his heart that Miles had *right* on his side, and he saw that *might*, too, would probably become his. Environed as he was by powerful friends, whom he was daily gaining by his talents as an artist, he felt his only security lay in driving Tremenhere to some act of desperation, which would make him fly the country, either in despair or to conceal Minnie from all. He had known his cousin's disposition from boyhood; he knew every turn of his hasty, but noble heart; and all the harsher feelings of it had been drawn forth, as stains by fire, in the wrongs of his mother and his own Minnie. There are so many vile ones on earth, who know no law where money is proffered in exchange for evil, that Burton found ready tools to watch all—report all; even the household hearth was not sacred from this pollution.

Some weeks had passed; Minnie had not seen Mary Burns for a considerable time, when, one day, a note reached her from her, brought by a messenger who said it required immediate attention. Tremenhere had left home about half an hour, on business which would occupy him nearly the whole day. His manner had been

feverish and excited all the morning, and Minnie would not have wondered had she read the contents of another of those vile missives which he had received an hour before leaving. After reading it, by an involuntary movement of disgust, he pushed her from him, as she stooped her head over him while he sat motionless at his easel, the uplifted brush awaiting the command of genius to call life on the lifeless canvass; but his thoughts were more of death, than any existing, glowing creation.

"Miles, dearest," and she bent down to embrace him, and her always slight figure, looked now like a lithe graceful withey, so fragile its outline; "what are you thinking of?"

He pushed her from him, and then, as the girl stood, pale and alarmed at his violence, his haggard eye forgot its troubled glance, to soften into tenderness, as he drew her passionately to his heart. And the trembling voice said—

"Forgive me, again, Minnie—forgive me; I am a very wretched man, loving you as I love you, and——" He paused.

"And what? my own husband."

"Never mind, Minnie—never mind! You will not, will you? Oh! promise me you will not." He was speaking to his thoughts.

"Any thing, Miles!" she answered, old fears of his perfect sanity making her shudder. "What is it you wish me to promise?"

"Never to forsake me, come what may; be your feelings towards me what they may, hide them, Minnie; let

me be deceived if you will, but never let me see it; and oh! do not forsake me, or I shall go mad!"

She could not answer. Her tears were frozen by fear. She really thought him deranged; and so he was —that worst madness—jealousy. For the overwrought mind was not fighting with idle fancies, evanescent as vain; but with a cold, tangible reality, built on many a doubt and distorted act or word of hers, and still worse on the letters of his anonymous correspondent, whose last letter, received that morning, ran thus—

"If you wish to verify all, leave home early, professedly for the day, and watch your house; be in readiness to follow, and you will need no further proof or admonition to enable you to convince yourself. A hired brougham will be at the end of your lane. The driver, ignorant of all, will place himself at your disposal, on your giving the name of—'Gray,' as well as another—'twill keep him in your memory.

"Your sincere, but unsuspected FRIEND."

And Miles was resolved at last to have proof, or else never again suspect—never read another letter, but burn them unopened.

"You do not speak," he said, again drawing her, shrinking from terror, close to his heart, by the arm which clasped her. "Poor child—poor Minnie! I have frightened you; forget it, my child, I am unfitting for so frail a thing as you. I should have mated with my own kind, something lion-born, and you—you with ——Minnie," he cried, changing his tone suddenly, and looking full in her face with his dark, gloomy eyes,

"you should have married such a man as Lord Randolph Gray, and have led a life of luxury and peace. He would never have terrified you, as *I* do; I think you would have been very happy—I think he loves you, Minnie."

The suddenness of the words, his change of manner, all combined to call the warm blood to her cheek.

"Miles," she said in agitation, "do not say things like these; even in jest, Lord Randolph's name should never be mingled with mine in a breath of doubt, after that one painful scene at Uplands—you forget, too, he is Dora's——"

"Oh!" laughed he hoarsely, "those things are soon broken off. Now, Minnie, were you free, on your sacred soul, do you not think that man would propose to marry you?"

"On my sacred soul, Miles," she answered solemnly, shrinking from his arms, almost with a feeling of dislike towards him at the manner of his speech,—"I do not think so; and this I *know*, were I free, fifty times over, I would refuse his lordship."

"Forgive me, Minnie, forgive me—forget this!" and he once more folded his arms around her, as he rose from his seat. "I am unworthy of you, yet *indeed* I love you." His smile was almost as of old, and once again they were at peace; *he had forgotten the letter*, but it was only the merciful oblivion of a moment; their peace was like a house built on a blasted rock, through the caverns of which the wind whistles mournfully, shewing the hollowness beneath.

Shortly afterwards he quitted the house for "nearly the whole day," he said. He was gone; and she sat silently thinking, as now was her wont when alone; there was nothing to restrain her feelings having full play. Before him she often forced a gaiety she did not feel: now she sat in sorrow, and the once laughing face looked pale and care-worn.

"A letter, if you please, ma'am," said the footboy, presenting one. She took it, the characters were familiar. "Poor Mary!" she said, refolding it when read; "I have indeed much neglected you of late; and it was a sacred duty to do otherwise, lest by that neglect your heart had once again grown callous or reckless in the midst of troubles. We should uphold a fallen sister who has risen, lest the weakened limbs totter again, and sink, never to rise! I will go at once and see her; I am sure my doing so must please Miles—poor Miles, my own dear husband! John," she asked, as the boy obeyed her summons to the room again, "who brought this note?"

"I don't know, ma'am. A man; he said there was no answer required."

"Go," she said, "round to the stables, and order me a fly immediately, without delay."

The letter said—

"Dear Mrs. Tremenhere—I am sure you will pardon my writing to ask you, as a very great favour, to come here to-day. I am in much trouble, and have only you to comfort and support me in it, by your counsel and

advice. Pray, forgive the trouble I am imposing upon you; and pray be here if possible by two o'clock.

"Humbly and sincerely yours,

"MARY BURNS."

The fly drove to the door in a quarter of an hour: it was one o'clock.

"Drive quickly!" cried Minnie, as she stepped in and gave Mary's address; "I am late." The man touched his hat, and obeyed. There was a lane leading to the road from their house; at the corner of this a brougham appeared, coming towards the villa. "It is Dora!" exclaimed she to herself. "If I stop, she will delay me; moreover, she does not see all as I do; dear Dora is more coldly calculating, and lectures me for visiting poor Mary; I will not stop now, but write and tell her to-morrow; she will call again, and for worlds I would not forsake Mary in her trouble." As she thought all this, with one hand she hastily drew down the blinds, and leaned back in the carriage. She did not see Dora, neither did she see the occupant of another brougham, with the blinds half down, who was watching all, with a pale, anxious face.

"Follow that fly," he said, in a scarcely articulate voice, pointing after Minnie's—"not too closely, but keep it in sight——She did not even speak to her cousin," he whispered to his trembling heart, "but drew down the blinds to avoid observation!" And he pressed his hands over his strained and burning eyes.

CHAPTER V.

It was scarcely two when Minnie stopped at the door of Mary Burns's cottage; alighting, she rapped. The servant of whom Dalby made mention, opened the door. But, let us hasten to say, of all this he was ignorant; the game was too deep a one to be entrusted even to him.

"Is Miss Burns at home?" asked Minnie.

"No, ma'am; she has been out some time, but I expect her very shortly. Will you walk up-stairs, in the drawing-room?"

Minnie obeyed, desiring the fly to wait. Before going to this apartment, however, she entered the parlour, and there found Mary's old mother sitting, childish and insensible as ever to all around. She spoke a few words to the deaf ear, and looked her sympathy in the unconscious face; then turning, followed the servant up-stairs. Here she paced the room impatiently some moments; then, sitting down, looked in the fire to seek some associations for her thoughts in the "faces in the fire." She was in deep meditation; she felt nervous, and full of thought.

Thought! What are our thoughts? They are like

dissolving views passing over the soul. One fades imperceptibly into another, brighter and totally different; then this one in its turn yields place to others, and so on, until at last the curtain falls over the last—and where are we? In an immensity of tangled imaginings, wide and spreading like eternity!

A long time she sat thus, and then a rap at the street door startled her; a step was on the stairs, light and bounding; it was not calm as Mary's generally, nevertheless she rose to meet it; the door opened, and she found herself face to face with Lord Randolph! She could not speak, but shrunk silently back, gazing on him.

"I shame to see it," he cried, advancing with extended hands, "that you, my dear Mrs. Tremenhere, have arrived first."

There was nothing libertine in his manner, nothing more than usual—glad to see her, and most respectful. "You are annoyed," he continued, as she involuntarily drew back; "but pray, pardon me: I was unavoidably delayed, and prove your forgiveness by telling me how, in what manner, I can serve or oblige you?"

"There is some strange mistake in this, some incomprehensible mystery, my lord," she whispered in terror, though scarcely knowing of what. "I never expected to see you here; why are you in this house?"

"Merciful heavens!" he cried in amazement, "did you not write, requesting my presence here? Stay! I have the note about me: I came unhesitatingly, knowing well that you were in the habit of calling here occasionally."

"I never wrote, Lord Randolph; there is some extraordinary meaning in this, coupled with the absence of her I came to see," and she seated herself tremblingly on the couch.

"Here is the note," he cried, not less agitated; "is not this exactly your handwriting?"

"Sufficiently like it to deceive an inexperienced eye; but I never wrote it, believe me."

"I do, Mrs. Tremenhere, most truly; but believe also that I obeyed the summons without one wronging thought of one I respect so sincerely as I do yourself."

"Alas! alas!" she said in a tone of despondency, "I have felt some time past that there was a web weaving around me, I knew not where; my husband is changed, and I—oh! I am so far from happy," and she burst into tears, covering her face with her hands.

"Do not weep thus; pray, do not weep," he said with much feeling, leaning one hand on the back of the couch on which she sat. "I will sift this to the bottom; there must be treachery somewhere—but where? and why?" He read Mary Burns's letter to Minnie carefully over. "Where is this girl?" he asked; "can she be false, for some demoniacal motive?"

"I do not think so: I would she were returned. Pray, let me hear the contents of the letter you received—I cannot read it." Lord Randolph hastened to obey; it merely contained a few hurried lines, as if written in trouble, imploring him to meet the writer at the place indicated, at a friend of hers, as she had something of importance to communicate, and begging secresy to all.

It was signed "M. T., Chiswick," adding in a N.B.—"Inquire for me; you know my name. Should I not have arrived, ask to be shewn to the drawing-room, and wait."

Minnie's tears fell thick and fast, her terror was so great. She felt she must be surrounded by enemies, and the worst, hidden ones—he was leaning forward, endeavouring to soothe, to guide, and counsel, where he himself felt so much in the dark: as he sat beside the weeping woman, the door opened quietly, and the servant looked in. "There was a gentleman there," she said, "wanting to look at the apartments which were to let, might she show them? Her mistress left orders for her to do so, when she was out." As she spoke, with an apparently innocent manner she flung open the door to the person, who stood behind her. A wolf driven to despair for food dares all—so will a coward for revenge.

Marmaduke Burton stepped into the room—Lord Randolph sprang from the sofa, and Minnie in alarm, without reflection, lowered her veil.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, Mrs. Tremenhere," he cried, starting back as if in surprise. "I was little aware I should meet you here! I beg ten thousand pardons," and he drew back.

"Sir!" exclaimed Lord Randolph with *hauteur*, "your presence here solves the enigma of the forged letters, which have brought Mrs. Tremenhere and myself hither, but it is not here you must answer for it."

"I do not comprehend you, Lord Randolph," he answered, advancing; "we mistake each other, doubtless. I have known the lady of this house from childhood; and,

being commissioned by a friend to seek apartments for him, I deemed it an act of kindness to benefit her, if possible, knowing how circumscribed her means are; and her troubles, I grieve to say, occasioned by an unworthy relative of my own."

He said this, not feeling positive that Minnie might not be shaken enough to doubt her husband's veracity about his (Burton's) seduction of the girl; it might do good any way, and materially change Lord Randolph's opinion of, and consequent interest in, Tremenhere.

"Oh, it is untrue!" cried Minnie, starting up, forgeting every thing but the slander of her husband. "Do not believe that man, my lord—ask Mary herself. Miles has been as a brother to her; and shame—oh! shame on the base tongue which proclaims the wrongs of his victim!"

"I see, madam," answered Burton, "that your old and natural prejudice against me has nothing abated; and I make no doubt, even my truly good motive in visiting this house will be misconstrued by you."

"There can be no further occasion, then, for prolonging your stay here, I presume," said Lord Randolph coldly; and here be it said, the indifferent, or rather neutral portion of his lordship's character appeared as the active and better had shone forth in his desire, however awkwardly executed, of making Tremenhere from shame do Minnie justice, when he supposed her an injured woman. Had he now taken up the intrusion differently, and alarmed Burton's coward heart, by his resolution of sifting the mystery thoroughly, and in the

presence of Mary Burns, who was momentarily expected, as the servant had told Minnie, Burton could not have refused, under the accusation of a knowledge of the mystification which had been practised upon the other two, to await Mary's coming; and thus have exonerated himself, if possible. Under any circumstances, fear of Lord Randolph would have silenced him elsewhere. On this subject, as it was, the other's supineness and policy emboldened him, and left a fearful arm in his hands to injure Minnie. Lord Randolph said to himself, "I have a very great regard for Mrs. Tremenhere; I like her husband, too; there is some mystery here; if I involve myself to unravel it, or punish Burton, whom I firmly believe to be at the bottom, I shall bring my name into question; and as Lady Dora, who, most probably, some day will become my wife, is Mrs. Tremenhere's cousin, all these unpleasant circumstances had better be left to die away; nothing will come of it; I shall withdraw from the acquaintance."

And so poor Minnie was sacrificed for the want of a resolute, sterling, English heart, to bring the darkness of the affair to light. Poor woman! all her strength of mind seemed to have deserted her, after those few words uttered in defence of Miles; and she sat like one bewildered by passing events, intoxicating from their combination.

"I have no wish to intrude further," said Burton, as he turned round. "I have only to apologize sincerely for the alarm my inopportune visit has occasioned this lady and your lordship."

"I trust, sir," exclaimed this latter, "that you do not mean to insinuate aught against Mrs. Tremenhere? Our meeting here remains an unsolved mystery, which we can only leave to time."

"Far be it from me to wrong the purity of one so fair," answered the other, bowing lowly, with as much sarcasm in his manner as he durst shew. "Mrs. Tremenhere has a husband to judge her—I leave all to him."

And with this last bitter phrase of doubtful meaning, he quitted the room. Poor Minnie could not speak; she was thunderstruck, and crushed with presentiment and fear.

"This has been a most inexplicable affair," said Lord Randolph, as the door closed. "Can you devise any means for discovering the authors, dear Mrs. Tremenhere? I am, indeed, truly distressed at your annoyance; but, believe me, there will be, there can be, no unpleasant results—it has been some foolish jest."

"Jest!" she exclaimed, looking up; she was very pale. "It is more than that; there is some villainy in it, and that man is the author."

There was a garden attached to the back of the house, through the door of which, leading into a lane, Burton passed out as he had entered, conducted by the servant, whose physiognomy had not deceived the acute Dalby. At the same moment Mary Burns rapped at the front; and our readers will not fail to remember the occupant of the hired brougham who had followed, and was witness to the arrival of all except Burton.

Mary Burns went up immediately to the drawing-room, when her servant told her Mrs. Tremenhere was there. In an instant this latter was at her side—the presence of that girl seemed so great a protection—her coming, the only means of elucidating this painful mystery. Lord Randolph bowed rather uneasily as Minnie presented him. He wished much that he had sooner quitted the house. Yet, when he looked at her, he could not but feel deep commiseration for her, she was so agitated; in a few brief words she explained all to Mary, it would be impossible to describe her anxious state. Without the slightest hesitation she pronounced that Marmaduke Burton was the author of it for some vile purpose. It was not alone fear which agitated Minnie. There was a sense of degraded delicacy in it, that she should be drawn into even a fictitious intrigue with any man. She blushed deeply when this feeling came over her in all its force; especially when Lord Randolph said, meaning well, but certainly not advising wisely, "I should seriously counsel Mrs. Tremenhere not to name this affair to her husband, he has shewn himself so prone to jealousy; and *I* will take means to silence the servant who admitted us—thus the affair will die away quietly."

"Not name it to Miles!" exclaimed Minnie. "Pardon me, my lord, he shall instantly be made acquainted with it; and as one who, I trust, has too much reliance on me to suspect me of wrong. Let him seek those who cast so unworthy an imputation upon me."

Poor Minnie, in her earnest defence of her husband, forgot the past unhappy scene to which Lord Randolph had been a witness, but he remembered it; and, fixing an eye of deep pity upon her, said, "Think well, Mrs. Tremenhere, before you act; your future happiness may be wrecked by one false step."

"I think Mrs. Tremenhere is correct in her resolution," said Mary timidly. "Candour is ever best; and if I may presume to suggest to your lordship, I should assuredly beg that no bribe for secresy should be given to my servant. Honest uprightness, like Mrs. Tremenhere's and your own, needs no mask to hide its face."

"Perhaps you are right," he said; and, taking up his hat and gloves from the table, added—"And now I think it would be more advisable for me to take my leave; that is, unless I can in any way serve you," he said, addressing Minnie.

"Not in any," she answered, offering her hand; "it is far better you should leave. Most probably Miles will seek you to consult about discovering this affair; may I tell him your lordship will willingly lend any aid in your power?"

"Assuredly," he answered, taking her proffered hand; "and now farewell, dear Mrs. Tremenhere. I sincerely trust this effort of your enemy, whosoever he may be, will prove abortive in any way to annoy you."

"God grant it!" sighed she.

"I earnestly pray so, too," responded Mary, as the door closed on Lord Randolph, who reached the street, entered his cab and drove off, without noticing the brougham, drawn up some doors off, through the window,

at the back of which Tremenhere's pale face was watching him.

"It can only be the work of that wicked man, Mr. Burton," said the agitated Mary; "and let me pray and entreat of you, dear Mrs. Tremenhere, not to lose a moment in returning, and stating all to your husband."

"Assuredly he shall know all," answered she earnestly. "Poor Miles, it will grieve him deeply I know; but he will at once devise the best plan to frustrate our enemy; and now Mary, before I go, tell me, are you prospering in your teaching?"

Mary's face grew very pale; the corners of her mouth twinged, and vain was the effort to repress her tears, she burst into sobs. "I have learned a severe lesson of late," she said, "that though there may be those in the world, in pure Christian charity, to take the fallen by the hand, there are more who close their gates against her: may Heaven not close the eternal ones to them!—I have had two shut against me since we met; I have not dared tell you, dear madam; I knew how your kind heart would suffer for me."

"Good heavens!" cried Minnie, "how has it happened?"

"Some enemy," answered the other with quivering lips, "or better said, *my* enemy—the one who seems to seek the misery of all, alone can have done it. Past events have been by letter detailed; I was charged with them, and would not deny that the accusation was true. I accepted the shame as retribution."

"And have you then lost your pupils in consequence?"

"*All*," answered the unhappy woman; "for of the three families I attended, two were acquainted. One lady spoke of 'regret,' but 'there were worldly prejudices to be bowed down to.' I humbled myself, I implored them, for my poor old mother's sake, but it mattered little. At the other houses I was driven with insult from the place, and told that my manners bespoke no contrition or humility. Oh! if they could but witness the bowing down of my heart before Heaven for pardon, my sincere, my earnest repentance, they would not have condemned me so harshly."

"I fear," said Minnie taking her hand kindly between her own trembling ones, on which the tears of sympathy fell, "that the world in general judges only from outward seeming; the hypocrite may be pardoned and believed, but the lowly penitent woman, walking before her God, and seeking his will in all things, to gain pardon and peace, is rejected by man, because her tears are silent, and hidden, save to the one to whom all her thoughts are directed; and let this be your consolation, Mary, that there is a limit to man's power, and then the tears of contrition will shine like stars to light you on your road to where they will all be wiped away."

"May a better than myself bless you!" cried the stricken woman emphatically. "I did not intend saying so much to-day. May your consolation to me descend upon your own head in peace and happiness; and now, dear Mrs. Tremenhere, let me urge you to go, and tell your husband all, for only openness and candour can defeat the demon warring against us all."

"I will go," answered Minnie, pressing her hand warmly. "You are right, Mary; but do not you despond. I will see you again in a few days—now I will go at once."

And with a kind, gentle word to the sorrowing woman, she quitted the cottage, and, entering the fly awaiting her, drove rapidly towards home; and the brougham quitted its station too, and followed.

CHAPTER VI.

MINNIE arrived at home, and, hastily taking off her walking-dress, sat down to think, as calmly as might be, of the events of that day. Despite all her efforts, a pang shot through her heart at the idea of seeing Miles. His temper had of late been so uncertain, that she trembled lest any fault should be imputed to herself; the more narrowly she examined her heart, the less could she find any thing to blame herself for in this affair. While she sat thus, Miles appeared at the outer gate. As he traversed the front garden, she thought she had never seen him look so pale; and, when he raised his eyes towards the windows, there was an intense look in them, which made their hazel darkness seem like blackest night—this was probably owing to the excessive pallor of his cheek and brow. When he entered the room where she sat, a choking sensation arose in his throat—he had paused, too, outside the door, to still the bounding of his heart. She rose to meet him; there was a smile on her lip, but it was forced, constrained—fear kept it from expanding into cheerfulness.

"You are home earlier than you promised to be, dear Miles," she said.

His eyes were riveted on her face. "Yes," he answered in a deep, hollow tone, which he endeavoured to render tranquil; "but I hope not less welcome for that?"

"Ever welcome—ever the one to come too late, and leave too early," she answered. "Where have you been, Miles?"

"In several places, Minnie,"—and he stifled almost a groan.

"Are you not well?" she inquired, delaying what she had to say in terror, and really anxious too about him; his pallor struck her as so unusual, but without one dawning thought of the truth.

"Quite well, Minnie; but I am weary—very weary," and he sunk exhausted in a chair—it was the mind which had lost all nerve. She drew a footstool close to his feet, and, in kneeling upon it, took both his hands in hers; but, in so doing, she did not feel the thrill which passed over them; it was horror—the horror of doubt—no, she did not feel it; but holding them tightly, and leaning on his knees, she looked up in the face, whose rigid, intense gaze was fixed upon her uplifted countenance.

"Miles, I have something to tell you," she said at last; but her lip quivered as she spoke.

"Something to tell me!" he uttered, repeating her words; and a shadow of hope crossed over his face.

"Yes, dear Miles; but promise you will not fly in a passion: you do not know how you terrify me in doing so. Hear all I have to say, and then let us, as calmly

as may be, consult what is to be done." He could not speak; he was like one fluttering between life and death. She did not wait, however, for him to do so, but hurriedly told him the events of the morning; so anxious was she to say all, that she scarcely noticed his extraordinary silence. When she paused, he quietly drew his hands from hers, and still keeping his fixed gaze upon her, though the countenance had changed with every word of hers, still the eye had not one instant quitted her face. Withdrawing his hands, he placed them both on her shoulders as she knelt before him, and said in a low, measured tone, "Minnie, I know all you have told me; I followed you to-day. It may seem mean, unmanly, my doing so; but I was resolved to prove you —I knew all!"

"Knew all!" she ejaculated, shrinking back from his touch, as if it pained her.

"Why do you shrink from me, Minnie?"

"Because," she said, rising slowly to her feet, "you then have done it yourself, doubting, to prove me!"

"No, by heavens, I have not! Kneel down again, Minnie;" and he drew her reluctantly before him again. "Look upon me, Minnie, for I am your judge now, to hear, but not condemn. You have forced that character upon me; I came, fully determined to say nothing, to close my heart to proof and conviction, to bear all my wrongs, if such they were, and seek no elucidation, leaving all to time to prove you whatever you might be!"

"Oh, Miles—Miles!" she cried, looking up trembling in his face; "and can you suspect me still? And

could you live with me a day, believing me so false to you?"

"Listen—I have passed three hours of the bitterest anguish man ever suffered—a thousand mad thoughts and resolutions passing through my brain; and at last I came to the determination which you know, for I, mere man, cannot fathom this affair. I would not for all the world condemn you; for though not a man prone to superstitious thoughts, I feel there must be some demoniacal power in all this, Minnie," and he raised her face upwards in his hands. "You are either the falsest woman that ever drew breath—and if so, the breath which gives you life must be the vapour of hell, from whence you draw it; or else there is a power around us which we cannot combat with, and 'tis best to still the heart's beatings, to subdue ourselves to callousness, and wait for time! I am resolved *to bear* and wait. Now, sit beside me here," and he rose and drew her to the ottoman calmly and composedly, "and shew me the letter you received."

She was so lost in terror at his extraordinary manner, that it was in vain she essayed to utter a word; in cold silence she placed the letter in his hand; he opened, and silently read it through, and over again.

"One of three persons wrote this letter," he said—"I, or Mary Burns, or Marmaduke Burton, for from childhood we had the same masters."

"'Tis Marmaduke Burton!" she cried with energy, seeing at last a path through this tangled forest of brushwood. "'Tis Marmaduke; for, as you must have seen, he came

to Mary's cottage whilst Lord Randolph and I were there?"

A cold shudder passed through Miles's heart, which had been awakening from its stupor of sorrow and suspicion, to take his proved faithful wife to it. This then, was the cause of her candour. Burton's most unexpected arrival at Mary's had induced her, from fear of discovery, to choose the wiser part, and tell him herself, lest another should! Oh, what a demon jealousy is! how unsleeping, how grasping in intellect; though all is perverted to harm!

"Tell me all that passed," he uttered, without replying to her question; and, while she related, his mind formed all into the well-connected reality of a diseased brain. The same person who had so often warned him, none other than Marmaduke, had discovered this intrigue, and followed it up. The letter was probably written by Mary Burns, as an arm in Minnie's favour, should any thing be discovered by him; her absence, etc. Mary, who had once fallen, had doubly done so again, by pandering to the meetings of Lord Randolph and Minnie; he was a target for the scorn and contempt of all, and all these maddening thoughts passed through his soul, leaving him in outward seeming calm. There is *nothing* more fearful than this concentrated, chained passion—'tis this which leads the best man to cold, deliberate murder. Silently he thought all this, and then, when the mind had compassed all his misery, it paused to deliberate on revenge. Then it was that mercy crept in, like the last ray of sunshine to the eyes dimmed by

death, and he said to himself, "If she should be innocent still?"

And, lifting his eyes, they rested upon hers, troubled, but pure and holy in their dove-like innocence of expression.

"Minnie," he said, placing his arms around her, "I have many bitter thoughts in my heart. I am a very wretched man *now*—so happy once! But I feel my greatest sorrow would be your loss; as I before said to you, I *wish* to think you innocent. I would rather know we were compassed by fiends, and be ever waging war with them in darkness, than know, or believe you false to me; *that* would be my moral death, and make me the most reckless man on earth! I *will* believe you innocent."

"I am, Miles; believe me. I have not even a thought which has ever wronged you."

"I will believe you, Minnie, against all evidence but proof," and he took the trembling woman to his heart, so shaken, but so true.

It cannot be imagined, that with that pardon, or reconciliation, Tremenhere became calm and happy; true it was, that Minnie never quitted home without him, scarcely ever quitted his side, but the mad dream which had been, left its trace on his every action; he was a broken-spirited man. His profession was a toil of every instant—a necessity, not a pleasure. He saw Minnie growing daily paler and sadder, and, though his heart ached to see it, still he could not overcome his sensations of doubt.

"She is perhaps fretting about Lord Randolph," he thought to himself, "and after all I said, in condemnation of her, poor child! she perhaps deserves more pity; for I took her almost one, from her home. She had seen no one to fancy herself in love with, till I came. Unjust coercion drove her into my arms; it was probably more from indignation than from love, yet, too, I think she loved me once," and here he pondered on many an unmistakeable proof of affection; her watchings for his return, the lighting up of the whole countenance, which no art could imitate. "Yes," he continued, "she certainly loved me once, but then she is of a gentle, loving nature; she knew not the vast difference between *affection* and *love*, until *he*, perhaps, taught her. Poor child—poor Minnie! what a life of misery we have created for one another; but we must bear it, and linger on!"

And so completely did the thought take possession of his soul that these ideas were well founded, that for a while his feelings towards her assumed a tone of almost fatherly pity, so worn and old his heart felt. He had vainly endeavoured to trace who sent the brougham, the letters—in short, to *prove* it Marmaduke; but all failed.

The hire of the brougham, and order to send it to Chiswick, had been brought to the stables by a boy, who was not known or detained; there was nothing in the act to excite suspicion of wrong. He wrote to Lord Randolph a calm, deliberate letter, requesting, but in all politeness, that his visits might be discontinued. He was certain, he said, that Lord Randolph would see the

absolute necessity of such a thing, after the many unaccountable circumstances which had taken place. And the "Aurora" was taken, unfinished, from her easel, and placed aside, and not a word on the subject passed between Minnie and her husband; it was a state of coldness which could not last. The affair had been so painful a one, that by mutual consent neither ever spoke of it, nor even named it to Lady Dora, whose visits were not of very frequent occurrence. One day, however, she called, having been absent a month at Brighton; she was more excited than usually happened to her. After sitting some time in evident uneasiness, she at last begged Minnie to let her speak with her alone. Minnie rose to quit the drawing-room; she grew trembling; every thing new, startled her.

"I will not trouble your ladyship to leave the room," said Miles, rising coldly from his seat. "I am going to my studio; I should have remembered that husbands are often *de trop*."

"Pray, stay, Miles!" exclaimed Minnie, seizing his arm, like the Minnie of old. "There *can* be nothing which you may not hear, that is, if it only concerns me," and she looked at Dora inquiringly.

"I should prefer speaking to you alone," answered the other coldly. "It is something which distresses me much, yet almost too painful, I hope, to be true."

"May I ask," said he, pausing on the threshold of the door, "if it be any thing relating to Lord Randolph Gray?"

"It is!" answered she, with a look of surprise.

"And—my wife?" he asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"Then you are not in ignorance of it?" she inquired, with an amazed look, mingled with one of contempt. "And you and Minnie are——"

"Friends, as you see," he said, turning back and reseating himself, and by a movement of generous feeling, taking his wife's trembling hand in his. "Now, Lady Dora," he continued, "you may tell all you have heard, and we may be able in a measure, to correct any inaccuracies."

"How do you mean, Mr. Tremenhere?" she said haughtily. "Do you accuse me of possible untruth?"

"Not you, Lady Dora, but your informant, whoever he may be."

"It was a lady," she replied. "The conversation turned one evening, in Brighton, on paintings; your name was mentioned flatteringly as an artist of genius," and then she paused. The remainder was embarrassing to tell.

"Go on, Lady Dora," he said, in outward seeming calm.

"I had better tell you," she hastily rejoined; "for, if untrue, you may find means of silencing the slander."

"*If*," he uttered; "then your ladyship gives credit to the world's vile attack upon this poor girl; for I guess all you would say." Whatever his own fears at times might be in the warring of his spirit, he was resolved to uphold Minnie before all.

Lady Dora related all she had heard. In short, the

whole affair of Minnie's discovery at Uplands, and her subsequent meeting with Lord Randolph at Mary's. It had been told with severe animadversions on the meanness of Mr. Tremenhere, whose marriage had been kept a secret from the world until this affair brought it to light, and who could receive his wife again, and even Lord Randolph, knowing, to say the least, of great imprudence on his wife's part. Much of this Lady Dora allowed to escape her, as having been freely discussed at the club to which Miles belonged.

"Oh, Dora!" cried the agitated Minnie, "how could you, for one moment, believe so wicked a thing against me!—To think I could love any one but Miles! And I must be doubly base, to even listen to common flattery or gallantry from Lord Randolph, to whom you are engaged!"

"Pardon me, Minnie," answered her cousin decidedly. "I am *not* engaged to that gentleman, and never shall be; for, if you are innocent, as I will believe even without knowing all, *he* assuredly must have been connected in some manner with the affair."

Minnie then related all from the first, and though her cousin acquitted her of all blame, except linking herself, as she termed it, "with an improper woman—that Mary Burns," still she could not divest her mind of the idea that Lord Randolph was quite innocent. She begged Tremenhere's pardon for the wrong she had done him in her mind, and, whatever her feelings might be to Minnie, her heart rejoiced in not knowing him base, who had once been more than a passing thought. Tremenhere

received her apologies with cold reserve, and, stifling feelings which were distracting him, he inquired from whom all this information had emanated. Lady Dora, however, could give no exact account. She had heard it openly spoken of by those who were not aware that she was in any way allied to either party. With some difficulty—for he was obliged to veil his intentions from observation—Miles ascertained that the affair had been spoken of at his club by more than one person. This satisfied him; he knew then how to act; so he changed the subject, and affected a cheerfulness he was far from feeling, which continued even after Lady Dora had quitted the house. He did not allude to the reports; but there was something so noble in the heart of that man, that he banished all his own suffering from the surface, that evening, to soothe and cheer Minnie, who was low and depressed, beyond her own power to control the feeling.

The following day Miles rose more cheerfully than he had done of late; and, as soon as breakfast was over, he started for town. He really felt lighter at heart, for he had something tangible—not a mere shadow—to deal with. He had, without appearing anxious on the subject, elicited from Lady Dora the names of one or two persons who had spoken of this affair—and now it was to their houses he went. After a long research, he found one of them was still in Brighton; so sitting down at a friend's, for he avoided his club, he wrote a kind note to Minnie, telling her not to alarm herself, but possibly he might not return that evening. His manner had so

completely thrown her off her guard, that she did not dream of the possible business occupying him.

He arrived in Brighton, and in perfect composure proceeded to the hotel of the gentleman who had mentioned the affair. The meeting was at first one of extreme frigidity on the part of both, especially the gentleman's. Miles was determined and calm, having right on his side; the other hem'd and haw'd, evading a direct answer, when the former demanded from whom he had heard the reports in question.

"It will only then, sir, remain for me to treat you as the author," said Miles coldly, turning to quit the room.

"What do you mean?" cried the other, advancing.

"Simply what I say. If a gentleman propagates a vile, calumnious report of a virtuous woman, and then refuses to state the author, that he may be made publicly retract his slander, and re-establish the lady's fame, there is but one path possible, and that is, through the only known medium. I hold you, sir, responsible."

His cool determination alarmed the other. It is not a very pleasant thing to have a hole made through one's body, by either sword or bullet, because one possesses a talkative friend. A parley ensued; and then at last Miles went forth with another name—this was a lady's, rather more difficult to deal with. The only way, then, is to find out the lady's nearest household tie; and, in case of refusal on her part, appeal to him. They say men have an easy time of it; but assuredly such would not be the case, were some less pacific than they are in

demanding reason and authority from ladies for all they utter; and were their fathers, husbands, brothers, etc., looked upon as responsible agents to act for them. In such a case, were I a man, I would marry a woman who always wore a respirator. She would talk but little, if compelled to whistle her phrases through layers of wires. Assuredly, these things were invented by some clever man with a Xantippe for wife.

But to return to Tremenhere. The lady he waited upon was one of those beings whose milk of human kindness had, at her birth, been turned to vinegar and gall. She never said a kind thing, except from some motive, and to those even she professed, or was bound to like; she delighted in uttering the most galling innuendoes; and she looked her character.

When Tremenhere was announced, she received him, though almost a stranger, with an air of pity, perfectly dreadful—that kind of air which inclines one to exclaim at once, "Don't pity me, for there's nothing in my case to excite that feeling—I won't be pitied!"

Here he had little difficulty at first, for no sooner did he name the motive of his visit, than the old lady commenced a string of well-arranged untruths, which amazed Tremenhere, and clearly showing how wisely he had acted in sifting the affair thoroughly. When she concluded—for the *historiette* was delivered as crudely to his ears, as if he were a perfectly indifferent personage in it—he could not but bite his lip; but seeing at a glance the nature of his informant, he deprived her by his coolness of half her satisfaction. Verily, dame Nature has three

tubs at hand, in which she dips her children when she creates them, according to the caprice of the moment—one containing honey and milk, one vinegar and gall, and the other an amalgamation of spices.

When this abluted thing in the second tub had told her tale, she paused—this was not what Tremenhere intended, so he simply inquired her informant's name. Oh! this she never could give! It had been related to her under a promise never to divulge the name; she never could!

"And so, madam," he said contemptuously, "though you feel bound in honour to conceal the name, no such feeling prevents your blasting the fame of a pure, innocent woman, by promulgating infamous falsehoods, which I am resolved to silence; since, then, you decline giving me the vile author's name, it is to your son I must apply!"

This was a lesson the lady had never learned, and it would be well if it were more frequently taught to those who only exist with satisfaction to themselves, by ruining the fame of the innocent, whom they detest, and cannot comprehend. A loud shriek burst from the terrified woman; for, if she did love any thing but herself on earth, it was her tall rawbone son, in the Grenadiers—but not all her entreaties could avail, Tremenhere was resolute, he was on the track, one footprint lost, his game might elude his grasp. With many sighs, and beatings of her chest, for heart she had none, the name burst forth of Mr. Marmaduke Burton, and with its utterance a deep groan struggled from Miles's bosom, but it was

one of satisfaction; for not only did he hold his bitter enemy, but the union of events for the moment convinced him of Minnie's innocence, and the other's authorship of the plot to destroy his peace. With a lightened heart, he quitted the bewailing woman, who allowed it to escape her, that it had been confided to her, on a solemn promise given *not to name him;* and Burton, in doing so, imagined she would not, for a fellowship of feeling and mind made him an especial favourite of hers, and he well knew, in telling her, the facts would lose nothing, and Miles be irretrievably lost in all respectable society; he did not calculate upon its arriving so quickly at his ears, neither of his determined conduct should it do so. He did not yet know his cousin.

CHAPTER VII.

TREMENHERE lost no time now in following up his intentions; he inquired every where, and at last discovered that Burton was in town. Late that same vening, he returned home, and great was his satisfaction to find Skaife domiciled there. He, we have said, was the only man in the world, perhaps, of whom he could not feel jealous; where lay the germ of extraordinary confidence, 'tis impossible to say, but with open-hearted confidence he wrung Skaife's hand, which cheered poor Minnie's heart, for she was terrified at the fancies her mind had been conjuring up about Miles's return; and when he said to the other, "I am delighted to see you," there was no mistaking the truth of the feeling: Miles could not feign a cordiality he did not feel. The union of these three gave rise to one of the few happy evenings, or even tranquil ones, Minnie had passed of late. Skaife came laden with letters and love from Dorcas, and even poor Mrs. Gillett. Of the many painful things they had heard at Gatestone, he said nothing before Minnie; he spoke cheeringly, and did not even utter what he thought, of her being unhappy, when he gazed with a stifled sigh on her altered face. It was in good truth Minnie spiritualized; for she seemed

scarcely mortal, so thin, pale, and heavenly patient she looked.

When she had retired, then Tremenhere, no longer under any restraint, spoke of all his care, his wretchedness, which he strove to conceal from her; but though he mentioned the reports which had reached him through Lady Dora, he passed them over lightly. There was no man to whom he would sooner have applied, as a friend in such a case, than to Skaife, but his calling forbade it; he could not act with Tremenhere, and this was what he now required in a friend; neither durst he confide in the other all his plans; they might be betrayed in kindness to Minnie, or, even more seriously, to authorities which would frustrate them. He spoke painedly of them, but yet, rather to Skaife's surprise, also added, that time alone must clear them up.

"I am a wretched man!" he said. "There is a weight on my heart nothing, I fear, can remove."

"Surely," cried the other, "you cannot, for an instant, suspect your wife? You must see, and know, that the deep villainy of one man alone, has produced all these sad events? Let me conjure you, do not give him the triumph of seeing that he has succeeded in estranging your heart from one so good and pure."

"Skaife, I never shall love any one as I love her; 'tis that love which makes my existence one of torture, for my base nature is fighting against my better judgment, and at times it gains the mastery. There are moments," and his voice trembled as he uttered these last words, "that I wish she were dead; for then I could

alone, bear my crushing sorrow; but the fear that she may ever love another, or even survive myself, is worse than the bitterest death could be!"

"Do not utter such things!" exclaimed Skaife, with a cold shudder. "Place all your faith and reliance on her; *she* will never deceive you, but your own heart may, and prove your basest traitor."

"Well, let us not speak more of it now. A day of retribution must come for that villain, Burton; leave him to fate—she has long arms and clutching hands." His apparent coolness disappointed the other; for he felt, without thinking of a hostile meeting, that Tremenhere might, and ought to seek means of silencing these slanders, and he resolved on a future occasion to suggest as much to him.

Before returning to Chiswick from Brighton, Tremenhere had sought a friend on whom he could rely; and, placing the affair in his hands, requested that no time might be lost in seeking Burton, to solicit the name of a friend who would act for him, in a meeting with Tremenhere. No apology would suffice, unless he consented to publish to the world, in terms not to be misunderstood, the whole part he had taken in the affair, from first to last; and this it was scarcely likely he would do. Having arranged this, he returned, in the more tranquil mood in which we have seen him, to his home.

Early the following morning his friend came to the villa. He had called upon Burton, who essayed with white lips to deny any participation in the affair, from first to last. The evidence of the persons whom Tremenhere

had seen in Brighton, he treated with perfect contempt, as inventions to screen some other person; and finally refused most positively to meet his cousin. He had a prejudice against duelling, he said, especially with one whom he had known from boyhood; he sincerely pitied him for his turbulent, ungovernable temper, and great hatred towards himself. In short, he summed up all by hypocritically drawling forth, that could he serve him in any way, he too gladly would do so; and assuredly, to injure him, was farthest from his thoughts; and concluded with much deceitful, mawkish sentiment.

When his friend related this, Tremenhere paced the room, at first in indignant, contemptuous rage; then an unwonted calm came over him, and he smiled as he said, stepping before his visiter—"This man has taught me a talent I never might have possessed without him: that of watching, unseen, the movements of others. I will return to town with you; I have paved the way for doing so without exciting suspicion. I must act decidedly and secretly, for that coward else, will seek the protection of the law, and defeat my object. Let us be off."

And, quitting the studio where they were, he entered the drawing-room where sat Minnie and Skaife, she looking so much happier than of late had been the case. Tremenhere, too, seemed light at heart. He was a man so generous by nature, that the greater the sacrifice he made for a person, the better he loved them. He was ready to offer up his life for Minnie, for in his moments of energetic feeling he *knew* her innocent. 'Twas only when the muscular power relaxed with thought and

care, that he doubted her; it had removed a load of suspicion from his heart, the knowing who really, beyond mistake, was his enemy, he knew so well all he was capable of. As he took his hat to quit the room, his full, deep glance fell on his wife, who was looking timidly at him. Skaife saw the look. It spoke so much wretchedness, that his heart ached bitterly for her. Coming towards her, Miles stooped, and, unheeding the presence of the other two, warmly embraced her. "Be a good girl, Minnie," he said cheerfully, "and amuse our good friend, Skaife, and I'll bring you—a fairing," he added laughing, "from town." His glance crossed his friend's as he spoke.

"Bring yourself soon," she said, smiling in his face; "'twill be my best present."

He pressed her hand warmly in reply. There was so much renewal of love, that she felt her heart full of hope —long foreign to it.

Tremenhere and his friend drove quickly to town; the former's object was, to watch Burton to his club, whither he went about twelve every day—and his, was Miles's. It is probable, that had this latter been in the habit of going himself every day, Burton would have quitted the field; as it was, Tremenhere had, by his absence, left him master of it; and here, as Tremenhere had ascertained, was the spot where he circulated his scandals freely to his own set. The two friends drove to the top of the street where Burton's hotel was, and stopping the cab where it would not attract notice, they resolved to watch for awhile, before inquiring for him of the

hall porter. Fortune favoured them this time, for in less than half an hour, Burton came forth on foot; and glancing carelessly up the street, walked on, and the cab followed. As they hoped, he proceeded to his club, within a few doors of which the others alighted, and walked quickly towards it. Burton entered the reading-room, where sat some dozen or more men, poring over their papers; thence he stepped into another, nor noticed his cousin, who followed at a distance, keeping him in view.

Tremenhere's aim was attained: in the reading-room he met several friends,—acquaintances were better said; hastily addressing each, without appearing to notice the chilling looks of some, he said, calling each by name, "Leave your papers awhile, and follow me; I will give you something better worth seeing than aught you may meet with there."

And most did so, for curiosity is a spirit fluttering over the heads of the many, few indeed are those eschewing her worship. On walked Tremenhere, accompanied by his friend, and in his wake came the others. At last he stood silently, surveying all in the room, where dozens were collected, some in knots talking, others at breakfast, others reading. In a glance Tremenhere took in all this, and the faces of friend and foe. He advanced a step. Burton stood with his back towards him, conversing with two or three persons. Was it instinct which made him suddenly turn, and grow white as the snowiest cloth on those tables, when he saw Tremenhere *erect*, smiling, and towering in height and

manly beauty, as he gave him a glance of scorn? He stopped suddenly in what he was uttering, and made a movement to quit the room by a side-door. There is a power, an irresistible spell, in dignity and right combined, (indeed the former cannot exist without the latter,) which make the meaner mind bow down before them.

"Stop, Marmaduke Burton!" cried Tremenhere with his full, rich voice of command. Burton made an involuntary pause, and then, with a quick shuffling gait, attempted to seem dignified as he moved towards the door. "Stop him!" cried Tremenhere again, calmly waving his hand, "that he may at least have the satisfaction of hearing me, face to face, proclaim him slanderer, liar, and coward!"

Burton was forced to turn. At these words a movement passed over the whole room—no one, however, spoke.

"Look at him!" said Tremenhere, contemptuously. "He dare not face what he has done; were it not from inability to move—for no shame withholds him—he would fly!"

"These are harsh words," said an officer, advancing; "are you prepared to prove them?"

"That I am," answered the other; and in words as brief as possible he told the tale, and his visit to Brighton—the evidence there—summing up all with the refusal on Burton's part to meet him.

"It pains me deeply," continued Tremenhere, with much emotion, "to drag the name of my wife before this assembly; but her accusations have been openly

spoken, or whispered in every select circle where my humble name is known. 'Tis true I might have sought my remedy by law; but I leave such to colder hearts and heads than mine. I forgot," he added, looking round upon all, "to present myself to many who may not know me. I am Miles Tremenhere, now an humble artist, once heir of the manor-house, ——, Yorkshire; that, my worthy cousin, who from childhood had been my companion, has for a while—*only for a while*—deprived me of——but let that rest. I came to-day to proclaim him what you have all heard, and he *dare* not deny it. Once I have horsewhipped him for his base seduction of an innocent girl,—flogging is thrown away on callous skins like his; so I brand him—liar and coward!"

"Sir," said Burton, endeavouring to seem calm, "you shall answer for this, and bitterly rue it."

"Answer it!" laughed the other, "when and where you will; this is all I ask at your hands."

"Ah, Twemenhere!" exclaimed a voice, as the speaker just entered the room, amazed at the *fracas*, but ignorant of the cause, "is that you?—what a stwanger you are," and he held out a hand. Tremenhere's trembled as he warmly shook it: he was all woman in gentler emotions, and never was there a more grateful heart than his; he felt Vellumy's act deeply. This act seemed the signal which many had been awaiting, not from wavering indifference, but for want of the electric spark, which moves Englishmen more slowly than others, but surer, when its propelling force comes, than

all the very warm and sudden impulses in the world. In an instant Tremenhere was surrounded. Those who a day before had condemned him, perhaps too hastily, on the whispered calumnies of Burton, now pressed forward to press his hand. Some few, whose dislocated nerves can never be strengthened to any thing warmer than zero, grumbled at the disturbance, and talked of secretaries, rules, etc., etc.; but the majority rejoiced as over a lost brother restored, for Miles had been a favourite with all.

In the midst of this, Burton had slunk away; he could not bully, nor defy; Tremenhere had proof in the evidence of his (Burton's) kindred spirit, and betraying confidant, at Brighton. And certainly there was no table so merry as the one at which Tremenhere sat, surrounded by his friends, to repair a scarcely touched breakfast at home. He would have preferred leaving at once, to return to Minnie and Skaife, especially to remove from the latter's brow that not-to-be-mistaken cloud of disappointment, which he had seen gathered there, at his own supposed coolness and indifference about his wife's fame. But policy dictated another course; there was much he had not explained, and he took this opportunity of doing so. It is indeed to be regretted, that the finest natures admit of passions dark and overwhelming, and the strongest minds are, in some things, the weakest. To see Tremenhere amidst his friends, glowing with joy at having restored Minnie to fame, who could imagine that he ever again would be led down the bitter path of doubt and suspicion, or that

these two poisons were only awhile dormant in his breast?

When he entered his home, for some moments he could scarcely speak, then, grasping Skaife's hand, he said—

"Give me a grasp from your heart, my friend—to-day you could not, I saw that—now you may, for I have done what a man should."

"You do not mean!" exclaimed the man of peace, with a feeling akin to alarm, "that you——"

"No, no," laughed Miles; "the coward would not fight; I tried him, but he refused. 'Tis better, done as it is."

Poor Minnie had crept tremblingly to his side. In her fear she almost forgot he was safe before her.

"I *do* congratulate you," cried Skaife warmly; "for it was not a thing to be passed quietly over."

"Poor Minnie—poor child!" said her husband, placing his arms round her, and bending his deep, loving eyes upon her; "how you tremble! Think, darling, I have silenced all who calumniated you—justice, like truth, will eventually win in any fight. The devil deserts his children in the utmost need; we deal with brighter spirits, dear, and will triumph over all!"

"Heaven grant it, dearest Miles! You have indeed been good and kind to me to-day—and always," she added hastily. "You have been tried severely; we shall be *so* happy now. Dear Mr. Skaife, you have been indeed a messenger of peace. I feel as if all would

turn to me now, even my uncle Juvenal, and aunt Sylvia."

It was a day of deep rejoicing—each heart was light and glad.

The following one Mr. Skaife visited Mary Burns; but there he had little joy to see—the unerring hand of deep malice had done its worst. She had been dismissed from every house, some less coldly than others; but even the kindest said, only in excuse, that, though they would gladly, *if possible*, serve her, yet it would be a thing unexampled for them to fly in the face of society's laws, as by the world laid down; quite overlooking the fact, that there *will be* a world where they might be called to severe account for uncharitableness and harsh judgment of a repentant sinner; but this is worldly wisdom, and worldly virtue, which dictate all. Few are virtuous from truly religious motives—we speak of the world *en masse*. It is either from a sense of innate delicacy, morality, and fear of the public reprehension, should discovery take place; few indeed, in comparison, place first on the list, the condemned sin which makes the devils rejoice, and angels weep. So Mary was left to starve, beg, or return to evil, that society might be kept untainted. She had assuredly found forgiveness, where it is too joyfully given, and with rejoicing; but with man—that is, on these cold, unforgetting shores—to fallen woman, she found none with the mass; so Minnie and Skaife both advised her to quit England. 'Tis sad, but true. Much as we love our native land, we are obliged to own that our neighbours look more to the pre-

sent than past; and if a woman evince an earnest desire to become honest, there will indeed be *few* to point and say, "Avoid her, she has sinned;" and *many* to hold a hand forth to a tottering mortal. It was with difficulty Mary could be persuaded to strive once more. She felt sad enough to lie down and die; but when those two, whose hearts were such sterling gold, upheld her, comforted, encouraged, and commanded in her mother's name, she once more arose, and with her knowledge of French quitted England for Paris, under the escort of Skaife, who was empowered by Tremenhere to settle her in some suitable business.

"I would not have my poor mother look down and see I had neglected one she loved almost as a child," he said; "and possibly we may all meet soon on those shores. I hate England."

And so strange is it, that great events of our lives are the offspring of some momentary inspiration, or thoughtlessly uttered word, that, until that instant, Tremenhere had not dreamed of quitting England; and, from that hour, an insurmountable desire seized upon him to leave London, the villa—all which had become hateful to him. His wishes were laws to Minnie. She would gladly have seen her aunts again—have been friends with her uncle before leaving; consequently she wrote, imploring pardon of the two hearts in rebellion against her, and begging aunt Dorcas to come and see her. But even this was denied her. Dorcas had been made to suffer so severely by the other two on the occasion of the former visit, that she deemed it better not

to enrage them further by coming; but to remain, and patiently work for Minnie's future pardon. She wrote most affectionately, and completely repudiated every thought of her niece's impropriety of conduct, which had been imparted to Juvenal by his friend, Marmaduke Burton. On this subject, too, Tremenhere wrote to Minnie's uncle, and detailed the whole affair as it had occurred, not forgetting the last discomfiture of his enemy in the exposure at the club. Whatever Juvenal's opinions might have been, had he permitted them full play, is uncertain; for he was one of those narrow-minded, prejudiced persons, who, having espoused an idea, find it completely out of the pale of their governing law to divorce it from their belief. Minnie was guilty—she must be guilty; Burton said she was. She had been imprudent once, and consequently, assuredly, would be again; in short, prejudice, with its narrow ideas and venomed breath, stood between poor Minnie and her home. Juvenal might have forgiven, if left to himself, for sometimes a memory would come over him of her gentle tones, her loving, girlish heart; besides which, he could not refuse to believe all Tremenhere wrote—there was evidence and proof; though he left the letter unanswered, it influenced his mind in his niece's favour. Gillett too spoke, and at last decidedly, in the rejected one's favour; but to counteract these healthful influences, came the soured heart, and acrid tongue, of one who hated Minnie for entering that state without her permission, which, in the whole course of her own life, no one had ever held open the

door to, though but a little ajar, for her to peep into—matrimony. Not a soul had once said a civil, or even word of doubtful meaning, for her to build a hope or an hour's dream upon, and she felt a double pleasure in stamping Minnie with her reprehension and condemnation. So she, poor girl, bade adieu to their pretty villa and England, to seek peace and happiness in a stranger land, with the one whom she loved as freshly and well as on the day she vowed to leave all for his sake. Skaife had returned, after a few weeks' absence, to his duties, near Minnie's childhood's home; but his heart was heavy. The man foresaw clouds in the horizon, over one he now loved as a dear sister; for, with all Tremenhere's worth, no one could be blind to his unconquered passion—jealousy, which only lay still to gain strength, and rise, like a giant refreshed from slumber, to overwhelm all.

Marmaduke Burton was gone abroad, no one knew whither, "on a tour." Dalby was a resident in town. Mary Burns was established in a small business for fancy work; her poor mother no longer burthened her—she slept in the quiet home, alike for rich and poor. And thus all stood on the day Minnie and Tremenhere started for Paris, where he had many friends to forward his views as an artist; moreover, he had orders from friends at home, and all seemed to smile on them as they quitted their native land.

"And now, Minnie," he said, tenderly embracing her, "no more care. I will banish all, and begin anew our life of love, and the labour of love I have sadly neglected,

though not forgotten. My poor mother—I must toil for you both, darling, now, and for *our child*, my Minnie, for I should indeed wish it to see the light in my lawful home; I will try so to have it."

CHAPTER VIII.

ASSUREDLY there is something very exhilarating in the air of Paris, when compared with our heavier, smoky atmosphere; this, and a complete removal from painful scenes, were all sufficient causes for the change in Tremenhere and Minnie. They seemed indeed to have commenced a new life; all annoyances had ceased, her colour had returned, the frown had quitted his brow, the past seemed like a dream, as his confidence was restored, and not unfrequently he laughed with her, over those reasonless fears which had once agonized him so much. Many of their mornings were passed in the Louvre together, he copying the old masters, or the glowing sunset pictures in the Spanish gallery; whilst she sat beside him, either talking, reading, or working, and thus two very happy months passed, and Christmas drew nigh. They were residing in an apartment, not far from the Louvre, in one of the principal streets, *Au Troisième*, where he found a room admirably adapted for him, having been used as a studio. *Au Troisième* seems a frightful height to English ears; nevertheless, to the many who are acquainted with Paris, it has nothing extraordinary.

All suspicion even seemed lulled to rest on his part;

for frequently Minnie went alone to visit Mary, who was, at all events, peaceful, if not happy, in her present successful path. Tremenhere talked of being obliged, very shortly, to re-visit England, consequent on some paintings he was completing to order. A shudder crept over Minnie at the thought; she had almost hoped never to see it again, except perhaps some day to re-visit Gatestone, but certainly not London; however, the patient loving wife said nothing, she was contented to go whither he went. They had not received any communication from Lady Dora, in short from no one but Dorcas and Skaife—all else was in quiet oblivion around them; and they, not the less happy, though sometimes Minnie would sigh when she thought of her cousin's unkindness. Marmaduke Burton, too, was lost to them, almost in thought; the truth was, he had made a tour to Italy, and so bitter had been his disgrace, consequent upon Miles's discovery of his wickedness, that he resolved to leave them in peace, despairing of success in separating them. In good, as unfortunately often in bad, when all human power has failed, fate steps in, and accomplishes in an instant that which years might else not have matured. Poor Minnie was one of those kindly-disposed creatures, full of thoughtfulness to surprise those she loved by some great joy—nothing had changed, or could chill her heart; and frequently some little quiet secret of her's to please Miles, tortured him once again into dormant, but not eradicated suspicion, until the perfection of her plot enabled her to give it to the light, and thus remove a weight

from his mind, which had oppressed it for days perhaps. She never saw this,—she was a very child at heart, forgetting in her present happiness her past bitter suffering. For some days she had been in a state of much excitement, and her visits had been more frequent than usual to Mary's. Other friends she had in Paris; but though there existed a certain constraint and distance between herself and this unfortunate girl, still we often cling more kindly to the person we have served, whatever their station, than to the one who has obliged ourselves, — a noble nature loves better giving, than receiving. Thus Minnie delighted in watching her *protégée's* progress towards honest prosperity, for Mary was so humble and grateful. Miles noticed her frequent visits to Mary, her distraction of manner, followed by sudden lightness of heart, as of hidden joy. Then, too, she often made a plea of laziness to remain at home, and he went alone to the Louvre. This worried him; nevertheless he said nothing, but he was not at ease. Suspicions arose; but he chid them down—he *would* be happy. Sometimes Minnie looked sad and disappointed, still she said nothing; and he forebore questioning, though not a glance of her's escaped him. The cause of all this was as follows:—One day Mary Burns drew Minnie into the little quiet back room adjoining the shop, and exclaimed, "Dear Mrs. Tremenhere! I have been so anxiously looking for your arrival the last two days; I did not like calling, or I should have done so."

"Why not, Mary? we should have been glad to see you."

"I know, dear madam, you are always so kind; but I wished to see you alone—my motive is this. You must have heard from Mr. Tremenhere, of his meeting me one night at his cousin's?" She looked down, and spoke with difficulty and pain. "I am forced to allude to this, to explain how I became possessed of what I now wish to speak of. Have you ever," she cried, changing her tone, "heard Mr. Tremenhere mention any one named d'Estrées?"

"Never," answered Minnie, after a moment's pause.

"On that evening in question," continued Mary, "there were several torn papers scattered about the floor,—a sudden impulse induced me, unseen, to secure one—and here it is. I found it only to-day; for I shame to say, in my own selfish troubles, I had forgotten it sooner," and she placed the torn piece of letter, which we have seen in the first volume, in Minnie's hand.

"Oh!" exclaimed she, after carefully perusing it, "this must have been written by Miles's father, before his birth. Oh, Mary! how may we discover this man? he must have been the person who married them," and the delighted wife almost danced with joy, to think of Miles's rejoicing. "Shall we tell him yet?" asked she after a pause, "or wait—search every thing ourselves? Poor dear Miles will suffer so keenly should he be disappointed; and then, too, he is seriously occupied now with a painting which engages all his attention. Let us work unknown to him, Mary; and, oh! think of our joy if we can, some day, place the proof in his hands!"

"I think your idea will be the better one to pursue,"

said Mary quietly, after a moment's thought—she was less sanguine, and more cautious than warm-hearted Minnie; "but we must not too soon reckon upon success, we may not succeed—he may be dead. Oh! how I wish I had secured the remainder of the letter! we might then have told Mr. Tremenhere, and he could have directed us how to act, we are so powerless alone."

"Do not say that; we will inquire how we had better commence our research. I do not like telling dear Miles yet; it would be so happy a surprise!"

And this it was which caused a mystery in Minnie's manner, which raised the demon suspicion once more in Tremenhere. All her energies were exerted in this anxious search, and in consequence she became thoughtful and pre-occupied. Mary had some acquaintances, from whom she inquired which would be the better way of discovering a lost address, and she was told to search the passport-office at the *Prefecture*.

The most timid woman will find energy and resolution for all, when the happiness of one she loves is at stake. In the first instance, the two women employed a man to go to the office for them; but this did not satisfy Minnie when he proclaimed his want of success.

"How can we be quite certain he went, or searched as we should have done?" asked she. "I will go myself."

"You cannot do so alone!" cried Mary, "and I am unable to leave my shop."

"Why not? Oh, but I can! Miles will be all day to-morrow at the Louvre; I will not accompany him,

and putting on a close bonnet and veil, lest I should meet any one, take a *fiacre* and go."

Mary tried to dissuade her for some short time, and then she relinquished the task herself, convinced that it would be the most secure and satisfactory thing to do. Minnie had no one to advise or assist her, and on Mary she almost looked as upon a sister, from the circumstances of her childhood passed with Miles and his mother; then again, they were mutually interested in this affair, and Mary was so humble and contrite in manner, it would have been impossible for the other not to love her. All this intimacy, however, did not pass without censure on Miles's part, not that he doubted Mary then; but he deemed, in worldly wisdom, that where Minnie's name had been in question, however innocent she had proved, too much caution could not be observed; then, too, the one dark spot in his happiness ever arose before him—her imprudence in flying with himself, which would ever leave one place in her fame open to animadversion; but he spoke to the least worldly woman ever created, and then at this moment she had so strong a motive in seeking Mary, that all his arguments terminated in a tacit consent on his part, however unwillingly given, when Minnie's arms encircled his neck, and her smiling cheek pressed itself like a child's to his, as she coaxed him into good temper; then, too, there was a fonder hope in his heart than any he had ever yet known, whatever he had once said of being even jealous of his own child.

Thus weeks crept on, and as disappointment followed

disappointment in their search, Minnie grew saddened and uneasy; still, every day she rejoiced that she bore her trouble alone, and that Miles was exempt. Poor creature! she did not perceive that her unexplained, altered manner, was making him once again most unhappy. Doubts, fears, suspicions of all, arose in his mind, and he begin to ask himself, "Could Burton be in Paris, and at some fiendish plot?" He resolved to verify this doubt by inquiry. He went to several of the principal hotels, without success. No such name was on their books; then, as a man perfectly acquainted with Paris and its habits, he went to the passport office, and searched; he was on the point of leaving, perfectly assured no Burton was in Paris, consequently it must be something else preying upon her mind and directing her actions, when a woman's figure flitted through the office, closely enveloped and veiled. But it was Minnie, and none other; for the second time, she had come to the prefecture to seek d'Estrées. Miles stood transfixed with surprise. Whom could she be seeking? Quietly he stole after her; without turning, she entered a *fiacre* and drove away. This was a day on which he was supposed to be engaged at the Louvre. He stood irresolute a moment, then, walking composedly back again, commenced a search after another passport and name—the act was the offspring of a moment's thought. "Yes, monsieur," answered the functionary, rather more civilly than these men generally speak in all public offices in France; "the gentleman, *ce milord*, is in Paris, I know—I remember the name—ah! here's the

passport, and address, *Rue Castiglione* 7," and he gave the shuddering Tremenhere *his own address.*

This method of seeking persons is most common in France, where, within twenty-four hours of your arrival, your passport and address have to be left at the prefecture's, under the penalty of a fine, should it not be done. It is needless to say that Minnie had not been inquiring for Lord Randolph, but following up what she had hoped might prove a trace of her all-absorbing thought, d'Estrées. Tremenhere said nothing; but, calmly thanking the official, walked forth. There was no cloud on his brow—nothing of anger or sorrow—but a cold, stern, desolation, far more dreadful to behold. At last the blow had fallen; there could be no longer any doubt, still less hope, of reclaiming her. She must be wickedly, wilfully bad, and false as the falsest thing that ever breathed. His brain, nevertheless, was in a chaos of perplexity. For whom could she have been inquiring? No one, perhaps; but why there? The residence of Lord Randolph, even in his own hotel, in nowise astonished him after a moment's thought,—it was a part of her unparalleled audacity. Those who have resided in France will know, how easily families may live for months in the same hotel or house, and never meet. Lord Randolph had come to Paris for a short time, and, disliking a regular hotel, had taken an *entresol* in this most popular and fashionable street, without having an idea of meeting with the Tremenheres in any way. And thus an event, the most likely and commonplace, did more for Marmaduke Burton's revenge, than

all his own plotting and scheming. Tremenhere returned home—he stopped carelessly in the *loge de concierge*, and inquired, "If Lord Randolph Gray resided there?"

"Yes," answered the man, "*milord* has been here several days; but he does not go out much—he is not in good health, I think."

"Thank you," was the calm reply, and Tremenhere turned from his door, and entered the gardens of the Tuileries. Here he proceeded to the loneliest part, and, relaxing his quick pace, reviewed all the events of this fatal day. Not for an instant did he doubt Minnie's perfect knowledge of Lord Randolph's being in their hotel. Here was no Burton—no Dalby to entangle their victims in a snare. How he laughed aloud at his own folly and blindness, in having been so long deceived. "In the very house with me!" he cried—"O, fool!—mad, blind fool! And O, woman!—falsest, basest! what a shrine, too, hath the devil chosen for his abode! so much seeming candour and lovely purity—even in the look. I could find it in my heart to shed tears of blood for this perverted creature, on whom I have lavished my soul's love, for I can never love again."

People may laugh and say, "'Tis very well for fiction," but there are many circumstances in everyday life far more extraordinary, far more fatally organized by a genius of good or evil, than any things the mind could conjure up. Are they sent as trials? as punishments? or the mighty Hand directing all, though through pain and suffering, for our ultimate benefit? or is it, that

there are moments in every one's life, wherein the spirit of evil has permitted sway? Who may divine this?

As Tremenhere turned again through the gardens, near the centre alley, half hidden by the trees, he saw two persons; they were shaking hands and parting: these were Minnie and Lord Randolph! She had quitted her *fiacre* on the Quay, and was hastening home across the gardens, when she most unexpectedly met this, to her, fatal man. Only a few words passed, and they parted, he in indifference and calm, she in almost terror at the meeting—but it was enough Tremenhere saw not hearts, but acts. He turned back again; a cold bolt of iron entered his soul; no anger was there, no passionate desire for revenge—nothing but calm resolution, which only became more intense, when he reflected on Minnie's position. At one instant he thought of returning to London, and suing for a divorce; then a bitterer feeling crossed his heart. "No!" he cried, "she has branded me for ever with infamy; *she* shall never become his wife, nor *their* child legitimate; this shall be my revenge—let her bear my name, blast it, degrade it, what care I? Name!" he exclaimed after a moment's pause, "I have no name; what am I? the castaway offspring of Helena Nunoz! All women are false; I believe in none, I am the blasted child of an impure woman—Nunoz—Nunoz—only this, and Marmaduke Burton has right, to carry him onward!" and the wretched man laughed aloud—laughed in the bitterness of a holy thought of childhood, and dream of manhood, desecrated—his mother. His last hope was gone; he could believe none

pure, proving Minnie false. He was not a man to sit down, and pine, and regret over his fate; but one to act vigorously, a resolution once taken. His heart had turned to stone, there was no "if" in it—not for an instant did he pause to think, or hope, but sped away to act. He was determined to inquire into nothing, in this last hopeless affair; he felt some demoniacal artifice would be employed to persuade him against all reason; he would not degrade his reason farther by listening—guilty she must be. Her presence at the prefecture had something in it in connection with Lord Randolph, he scarcely cared to inquire how, for assuredly she must, before that day, have been privy to his residence under the same roof with herself; Mary, too, was a party to it! What a web had been, and was around him! —he shuddered as he thought of his deceived heart, for so long a time. When his mind had compassed all coolly and deliberately, he proceeded to the apartment of a friend, a brother artist, unfortunately not a Skaife, to breathe justice or patience to him, but a man to whom woman had ever been a merely beautiful creation for art to copy, soulless, and unworthy a higher place in man's thought. To him Tremenhere told all, coolly, dispassionately from the first, not to seek counsel, but to act for, and with him. His listener shrugged his shoulder and smiled.

"Well," he said, "'tis better thus, perhaps; for with your genius, you will rise to high things *alone*. Hampered with a wife and children, you would possibly have remained stationary, a good father of a family, fit only

to paint a *bonne mère* and her *bambins!*—leave such positions to others—soar, *mon ami*—soar!"

Alas! he overlooked the fact, that to every one possessing real heart and soul—soaring is sorry work when there is no loving eye to mark our flight.

"Now, what can I do for you? command me," said his friend.

"See her!" answered Tremenhere sternly. "I would not leave that woman unprovided for; arrange how and where she will receive it; you will have tears and prayers—*I* have had them; disregard them, be firm, tell her *we never meet again;* do not say where I am; remove all my paintings—all—I will give you written authority to do so. Arrange every thing; and then I have other work for you. Stay, I will write one line to her; and that will be a warrant for all you may do."

And with a calmness, amazing to himself, he sat down and wrote coldly, dispassionately, to her; merely saying he knew all. He did not condescend even to tell her his accusations, adding, "of course, what I *know*, will reach you from another quarter. 'Tis vain to seek an interview; nothing shall induce me to see you—throw off all disguise, 'twill suit you better than this audacious duplicity. Farewell."

Minnie read this letter, and it did not kill her! yet her life seemed awhile to stand still. There was but one idea in her mind, that by that fatality which seemed to hang over her, Miles had witnessed her accidental meeting with Lord Randolph. A more than mortal fear oppressed her. There arose in her mind a belief in spiri-

tual agency—spirits of evil around her. She became almost lifeless with this strange fear. She sat like a statue; and saw one after another, the paintings, depart, which had been commenced beneath her eye, her caresses, her love. She was totally speechless, thoughtless; all stood still, even to her very blood, for she was cold as marble. At last the easel was taken past her; then the man stood still, as if awaiting some questioning from her; but though she had watched every action of his with intense gaze, idea of what was passing—she had none. So he went forth, and closed the door of the outer apartment, mentally ejaculating, "What a cold, heartless creature! Evidently she is glad to be released from Tremenhere, for this *freluquet de milord!* What a blessing for her husband to lose such a woman!" And this man, so talented in portraying the human face, was powerless *on it* to read the breaking heart! When the door closed, Minnie fell back on the ottoman, not fainting; but the lifeless blood was insufficient to bid the heart beat above mere existence. She was living, but lifeless to the touch, or memory—and thus she lay for hours alone!

CHAPTER IX.

"SHE did not speak, or expostulate?" asked Tremenhere.

"No," answered his friend; "she was too much taken by surprise, but I never saw a woman look more confounded in her guilt."

Miles did not speak for some time. Strange, how wrongs, supposed or real, darken the heart to every gleam of pity! It was not his vanity which was wounded—not any feeling of false pride, which urged him to so much apparent heartlessness; it was a disgust pervading his noble nature, at so much infamy in one so young and fair. Had he deemed her reclaimable, he would have nobly, generously, endeavoured to do so; but, believing what he did, he felt that any further contact with her would irretrievably sully his own honour, and plunge her still deeper into duplicity and sin. *If* she ever could repent, their separation—his utter contempt for her—might, through shame, open that channel to her. There was uprightness and conscience in his every thought; he even felt then, that, if he could be convinced she would be true and faithful to his rival, he would seek by the law that release which should

enable him (Lord Randolph) to do her justice. With these thoughts in his mind, after a calm survey of all remaining in the ruined temple of his heart, he wrote to this latter, and despatched his friend with the missive, which contained little of accusation, beyond a quiet, cool detail of facts, as he believed them, and giving him a choice of two things, either a solemn assurance to marry Minnie if he divorced her—he, thereby, submitting to the reprehension of the world at large—wherein many might blame him for the calmness of the act, so little in consonance with his real feelings, in preference to the more manly one of first demanding retribution at his hands in a struggle for life, or to meet him muzzle to muzzle, where often the luckier aim carries it above the more skilful. But we are wrong, for the luckier aim would carry undying remorse with it, in any noble heart, however wronged. "Live, and let live," and leave vengeance to Heaven.

It would be vain to attempt portraying Lord Randolph's amazement on receipt of this note; he was preparing to leave his apartment to dine with some friends when it reached him. He read, and re-read it; and then, with an air of wonder which would have convinced any unprejudiced person, asked whether really Mr. Tremenhere resided in that hotel?

"Apparently," was the laconic reply, sarcastically delivered.

"He must be mad, then, and deserving only *le Bicêtre*," answered Lord Randolph; "where may he be found?"

"By letter or message through me," was the reply.

"You are abrupt, monsieur," said the other, sitting down to write; "nevertheless, pray be seated."

"I prefer standing, *milord*," and he folded his arms doggedly.

It will be seen this was the last person who could successfully conciliate persons in so painful a position.

Lord Randolph wrote:—"You must be mad. I most solemnly assure you, until this moment, I knew not you were in this hotel. True, I met Mrs. Tremenhere to-day by accident; but she never named her address, nor I mine. You are at liberty to appeal to law, if it so please you to cast fresh ridicule on yourself; but though I most highly esteem Mrs. Tremenhere, enough to deem myself a most fortunate man could I call her lawfully mine; still, I have too much self-respect and vanity, under any circumstances, to seek a certain refusal, by proposing to her. For the rest, your good sense, and I hope, heart, will guide you aright, and make you see the folly of your conduct."

His lordship was ignorant of the manner in which Minnie had been treated, or he would have written more forcibly in her favour. Thus he dismissed his visiter, and departed to dinner. This letter almost shook Tremenhere's calmness to an outburst of rage; he only saw in it cool audacity, and that feeling of honour which makes a man oftentimes perjure himself to redeem a wrong act, and save a woman's reputation.

"Let us seek him," he said, moving towards the door. "I will await you in the street; you can enter and inquire for him." And, with a resolution he did not think

himself capable of, well as he knew his own stern nature in wrong, he stood almost on the threshold of his once happy home, whilst his friend entered to inquire where Lord Randolph might be found. This was easily ascertained, and thither the two men followed; he was dining with some friends at the *restaurant* of great renown, "*Les Trois Frères,*" and was in the act of detailing his most extraordinary and unpleasant affair, when a card was handed to him, and on it was "Miles Tremenhere!"

"Show the gentleman into another room," said his lordship with perfect composure, for not one spark of cowardice was in his composition. The waiter obeyed, and in a few minutes he stood before Miles and his companion.

"Your lordship will pardon this unusual method of proceeding," said Tremenhere, with dignity; "but the unsatisfactory nature of your reply to my letter obliges me to call in person, and demand another."

"*Demand!*" exclaimed the other. "What if I refuse?"

"Then it will but remain with me to attach to your lordship's name, one I should regret being forced to call into requisition."

Lord Randolph bit his lip to restrain an angry retort. After a moment's pause, to collect his coolness, he said, "Mr. Tremenhere, I do not deal with you as I should with another, for I look upon you as a lunatic; but for the sake of your most innocent, injured wife, I implore you consider well what you are doing!"

"My lord," answered his opponent, "I have not come to listen to idle words, still less to be again a dupe. I

come to demand, unless your heart fail you too much to meet me, to give me the name of *your* friend, to whom *mine* may apply; the rest will then regard them."

"Think well, sir," said Lord Randolph again, as calmly as he could be under so much aggravation. "You may some day rue this. I would, for an innocent woman's sake, save you from remorse, and her from ruin."

"By heavens!" exclaimed Miles, turning sarcastically towards his friend, "this man would have me take his mistress to my arms again, and receive him, perchance, as friend! My lord," and he turned wildly in rage upon him, "if there be a coward here, 'tis not Miles Tremenhere, or his friend."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lord Randolph, drawing a long breath, then keeping silence a moment to subdue himself, he replied, holding out a hand to Miles's friend, "Your card, monsieur, and I will immediately place it in the hands of my friend. I think now, sir," and he bowed to Tremenhere, "our interview may terminate; and may you never regret the day's work which will follow this."

And, holding the card given by the other in his hand, he quietly quitted the apartment. "After all," he said to himself as he moved to the room where his friends were awaiting him, "this fellow requires a severe lesson; it will cure his jealousy." And none was gayer that evening at table than Lord Randolph Gray. Tremenhere was otherwise. There was a monitor in his breast, not silent, for it was full of questionings. Yet

to all he replied, "It is justice and retribution,"—and then he sat down with perfect composure, and drew a rough copy of his will, which he purposed having legally executed on the morrow. "I will not leave her unprovided for," he whispered to himself; "this shall be my revenge on her."

The next day but one, Lord Randolph and his adversary met; and Tremenhere was carried from the spot severely, though not dangerously, wounded—a bullet having traversed his side, without, however, touching any vital part, though he became insensible from loss of blood. His opponent, with the manly self-possession which had characterised him throughout, remained until well assured there existed no danger from the actual wound, and then quitted the Bois de Bologne, where they met, and next day Paris, for Italy. Tremenhere was transported to the nearest house, and there he lay unconscious for many days.

Minnie recovered from her stupor, to find herself in the arms of her attendant, who was too much terrified to quit her and summon assistance. This woman had not entered the apartment where her mistress was for some hours; and her absence at the moment of her master's friend's arrival, prevented her knowing what had occurred. As Minnie returned to the warmth of life, and something of its consciousness, she inquired whether Mr. Tremenhere had returned. A reply in the negative being given, she for a moment was lost in wonder; then thought after thought crowded through her brain, and she found amidst them, one to lead her partially to

light. Tremenhere was gone—but where, or wherefore, she could not remember for hours. She wandered hastily from room to room, touching every thing there which had been his—her manner was flighty, half idiotic; the suddenness of the blow found her unprepared. At last the terrified servant beheld a cold, grey look steal over her face, the hectic flush disappeared, memory had returned, and desolation sat triumphant above all; and nothing could equal that desolation of heart—she did not imagine, for an instant, that Miles believed her guilty. It will be remembered that she was unconscious of Lord Randolph's residence in their hotel; she had hurried home, trembling, it is true, to inform Tremenhere of her meeting with him, and this was the only clue she had to his cruel conduct and desertion. She read his letter over and over; her first supernatural fears passed away, and she felt convinced either that he was mad, or changed in heart, so changed that the parting was pleasurably done by him. After viewing all his recent conduct, she dismissed the idea of madness, his coldness, and absence of manner for some time, since, in fact, her own mysterious search after D'Estrees, which had given him fresh cause for suspicion, arose before her, and her eyes seemed to open on the truth. She looked back to many things; his meetings with Lady Dora, first in the holly field at home, that had puzzled her, then at Uplands, so sedulously concealed from her—all arose, and without jealousy of her cousin, she felt, and more firmly in that it was an unworn, up-springing thought of an instant, that Miles

had once loved Dora, and possibly marrying her for pique, subsequent disgust had ensued. "Oh! if he really loved me, he could not have sought to prove me false so often," she said, "neither now have left me for so slight a cause, without even seeking an explanation, as my accidental meeting with Lord Randolph. He never truly loved me." And with this fixed thought, a cold desolation crept over her soul. Minnie had yet to learn all the madness of jealousy, therefore she was incompetent to judge him. She was not long left in any uncertainty about her desertion; her servant informed her that Mr. Tremenhere's friend had authorized the landlord to apply to him for all expenses, when madame quitted the hotel, as some unfortunate differences had occasioned a separation. This had been gratuitous pain inflicted in total indifference to her feelings on this man's part. Tremenhere had bid him say that he had quitted Paris.

Minnie, in all her keen suffering, had but one friend, Mary; our good deeds seldom are lost in the waves of life's ocean—they return again, to break at our feet. Minnie felt all this girl's kindness, but she had grown so cold at heart in a few days, that all failed to warm her to life. Of the duel they heard nothing; those kind of things are of more ordinary occurrence in France than among ourselves, and from whom could they hear it? Mary had written several letters to Miles's friend, their only clue, to beseech Tremenhere to listen to reason. After some days deep anxiety, they were returned, with a request in his name, that none more might be sent; he

was leaving France, search after him would be useless. At length a letter arrived from himself; the characters were trembling, for he was scarcely able to write them. In this he spoke little of wrongs, merely by the tone of it, implying Mary to be as guilty as his own wife. There was no regret, nothing to excite hope. He spoke deliberately of never again seeing her; he was resolved; he had no desire to do so; he had long been unhappy; now the tie was severed, he felt content. Of her pecuniary wants he had taken care, *however she might be circumstanced.* He named a banker in whose hands a sufficiency for her support would be placed quarterly, and then all care for her ended. With this letter Minnie's last hope died; it was indeed a hopeless one. Had she seen him, pale, haggard, and suffering, as he sat up in the bed to write it, she would have felt that he was less to blame than she deemed him. He scarcely knew what he wrote, still he felt anxious to settle all for her comfort, in case Lord Randolph should forsake her; for the idea was a fixed one in his mind, that though they might not meet publicly for a while, eventually, finding him no longer to be duped, they would fly together.

Nothing could induce Minnie to touch a farthing of the money Miles had allotted her; forsaken by him, he was as a stranger to her. Had she known he still loved her—had she known all, she would have followed to the farthest end of the earth, to find and plead to him. As it was, her heart sickened; she had been deceiving herself—deceived by him. Her pride arose, and, enwraping herself in it, she sat down, and forbore even to

name him. One thing she wrung from Mary in sacred promise: this was—that neither Dorcas nor Skaife should be informed of the whole truth.

"Let me bear my misery alone," she said. "Tell them, for I cannot write now, that he and I have parted: that there was incompatibility of temper—any thing you will; but do not—pray, do not, say he has forsaken me! Let them think it has been mutual consent, but do not blame him; they all hate him enough already," and the heart whispered even still, "poor Miles!"

CHAPTER X.

It was not, however, for some time that Minnie allowed Mary to write even this; for she still hoped at times, in her heart, that Miles would return. But when months passed, and she ascertained, beyond a doubt, from a visit Mary made to his artist friend, that he had quitted for Florence, then she hoped no more, and nothing remained but to act.

Dorcas was most uneasy at her silence, and then Mary wrote, and afterwards she summoned courage to do so herself, though every word written was penned in the bitterness of worse than death; for we may die happy in hope, and the love of those dear ones around us, smoothing the pillow as we depart in peace and faith to happy shores, beyond life's troubled sea. Minnie's grief had nothing of this. She was on a wreck in a dark stormy night—a wild sea foaming over her head—a dark sky, and impenetrable darkness above and around; but nevertheless she spoke of contentment, and a wish to be left in quiet. "We deemed it better to part than live in estrangement of heart," she wrote, "and I am resigned. If you love me, let the subject drop; nothing

name him. One thing she wrung from
promise: this was—that neither Dorcas
be informed of the whole truth.

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...ng existence at the expense of Mary; when
...means had become exhausted—the slender ones
her purse and jewels afforded, her pride arose in pro-
portion to her poverty. It was not false pride, but the
honest, upright determination, to burthen no one. "I
will leave Paris," she said to herself, "and go where no
one may hear of me."

This could not be accomplished without some difficulty; nevertheless, at last she succeeded, and one day, when Mary sought her in the humble room she had been residing in, she was gone. A letter reached her faithful friend, telling her that cares such as hers were better borne alone; even *her* sympathy pained her. She

re only her own heart should know her
the it to her. She bade her not fear
e, and would shortly give her proof
implored her to breathe to no
Mary, however, in kindness of
Mr. Skaife; the secret was
conscience to support in
the most bitter sorrow
it was told; and he
take charge of his parish
nest prayer, and his own heart's
ow Minnie whithersoever she might

metimes, but rarely happens in life, that where only expected to find a merely common acquaintance, we meet a warm and sincere friend—one who, through years of sorrow, never forsakes us—one who forgets self, to help us onward on life's weary track with our burthens—who, when all have forsaken save himself, clings to us still, and whose best, and only reward sought, is, when a gleam of sunshine flits across our dreary way. To such a one, honour and blessing—gifts, which his own good conscience will bring him, when, at the end of life's journey, he makes up his account, and reckons with his Creator. Such a copy of an original, was Skaife. But there was a machine working which he could not stay or controul; it would spin its wool, and weave its woof, before man might overcome it.

Tremenhere was in Florence; but yet he heard

of Minnie whilst she was in Paris. So blinded was he by his passions, that even her poverty—her refusal tacitly to touch his allowance, were snares in his eyes, to lure him back to deception. Again, if at times his heart softened, 'twas but for a moment—he grew cold again, and pitiless. Living too, as he lived, steeled his heart to gentler scenes or thoughts; he avoided all society, and, shut up in his studio, labouring to banish the bosom's emotions, became sullen, morose, and vindictive.

Months passed since their separation, and in the delicate, frail woman, living in almost privation in Marseilles, toiling at her needle for her daily bread, who might have known Minnie Dalzell? With the little money remaining to her, she crossed to England, to prevent discovery and pursuit; here remaining hidden a short time, she then returned on her footsteps, and hastened to Marseilles. She knew Miles was in Italy, and her yearning heart led her to the port, whence she might some day, perhaps, be called upon to follow his path. Bowed and saddened she was by sorrow, still her heart's conscious uprightness, and honest pride, upheld her; if she suffered, no one knew it; if sometimes she ate her bread in tears, and only *that*, for a day's nourishment, who saw her? No mere *person*, but One who sees and reckons to us our patience and confidence in him however he may try us, and Him, Minnie never forgot. Even as the trembling fingers, pale and attenuated, broke the hardened crust, the eyes, once violet in their depth and richness, now paler, clearer, more serene in their sadness, looked up and blessed the Giver of it in their tearful

gratitude. In all this patient sorrow came an almost overwhelming, unhoped-for joy; she held a living child on her bosom, small, frail little creature; its tones were as a bird's, so soft and sad, and through the little thin fingers the light shone, as you held them up, and only then did a ruddy colour, like pale ruby, show in them, proving they were not merely wax, an imitation of life. "I shall not have you long to comfort me, my boy," she whispered, when the sobered first joy gave place to reason; "but you will go to a better place, and plead for your mother, darling, and oh! do not forget him—your father. I would you might have seen him *here*, my child, to know him in heaven; but I trust in spirit meetings, spirit sight will show him to you, and we may all three rejoice, reconciled in peace and everlasting joy, which nothing human can attain to!"

He was christened Miles, and though the pale, fair mother grew paler each day, and toiled more, as the embroidery, in which she excelled, became more sought after, still the boy thrived, and as she laid him upon her lap, like a model of rare beauty, her lip smiled in placid thankfulness and joy, as she counted the dimples which day by day seemed to deepen in the now rosy cheeks and fingers. Hers was not a heart to keep its joy to itself; she wrote to Mary. True she did not give her address, but she wrote to bid her rejoice with her; her child was born and lived. A deep hope sustained her for some time. If Miles ever had truly loved her, he must think of the expected tie which bound them closer than ever. He would remember how he had spoken with almost boy-

ish delight of the hoped-for period, and he would seek her, and come. Alas! he did remember it; but in bitterness of spirit, and laughed in scorn over those boyish hopes, of which he had been the dupe.

Mary replied, in haste and deep anxiety, to the Post-Office, as directed; she spoke of Dorcas's trouble, Skaife's arrival and anxious search for her, but not one word of Miles! and then her heart sunk in utter despondency. "Not even now!" she uttered, as the big tears fell on her boy's sleeping face; "oh, he must hate me much!" Then succeeded a fear lest Mary should seek her, or Skaife, or Dorcas; she would fly again.

Among her employers was one lady who had taken a deep interest in her; she had a daughter about Minnie's age, and married to a Maltese merchant; she was about to become a mother herself, and, being called upon to join her husband in Malta, her mother implored Minnie, who was thought a young widow, to accompany her as nurse to the expected child. The offer was a tempting one; thus she could fly, fly all, and in change of scene, more than place, still, busy thought. A large offer was proposed to her to wean her own child when another should claim her care, but this she resolutely refused. "You will be too delicate to nurse both!" exclaimed the lady.

"I shall gain strength for all, Madame," she replied, with confidence. "I am stronger than I seem," and she thought of all she had mentally borne and wrestled successfully with, and mere physical labour could not daunt her strong heart.

She waited upon the lady, and, disdaining all deceit, at the risk of losing possibly the situation which she much desired to obtain, told all her story. She had truly said, when asked, that she had no husband, and others concluded he was dead. At all events, as we have said, assuredly on the Continent people more charitably judge a sister woman by present good conduct, than they seek, by diving from *curiosity* into the past, to discover, perhaps, some deep sorrow, or more deeply repented error. We deny that our Continental neighbours are less virtuous than Englishwomen, *in general;* but they are less severe, more charitable, less censorious. Minnie's candour raised her high in the opinion of those, now doubly bound to her, from pity. All her energies were called into play, to meet the emergency of outfit—money was required. The lady advanced her some, still she required more.

We are not relating a mere tale of romance, where fairy and unexpected gifts come to help the toiling and virtuous, but a story of everyday life, where the good and conscientious, by undeserved misfortunes, are thrown in much trouble, degradation, poverty, and *often* want; where the fingers once destined to be jewelled, must learn to toil, that the lip which had been born to command a host of servants, may eat its daily bread.

Minnie had been guilty of but one imprudent act, and this was the penalty due to it, and unmurmuringly she was prepared to pay it to the last farthing. Her hours of sleep became shortened; the earliest morning light saw her working, while her boy slept. Oh, woman—fellow-

woman! when some pale mother places in your gemmed hand the work you have commanded her to do for you, pause, and think that she may be in *all* things superior to yourselves. Pause and reflect, grow humble and grateful, where all your gratitude is due. Turn not away in pride, do not bid her seek some insolent menial for payment, who will grudge the hardly-earned sum, and insult, while giving it. Pay her yourselves—pay well, and in conscience, and above all, pay kindly; for how know you but that, in another place, this woman may plead for, or condemn you?

Time hastened on; the day shone fair and bright; it was in October, and the quay was thronged with gallant vessels coming and going, and friends were receiving in joy those who returned, and others weeping over the departing; but none were there to press Minnie to their heart in sorrow or fear, as, clasping her child to her bosom, she stepped on board the steamer "Hirondelle," for Malta. Once she looked back, and scanned the crowd, every face—it was a last hope, but it faded in the sigh which heaved her heart, where little Miles slept in peace. She turned away, nor looking again, went below. The anchor weighed, the steam gushed upwards in a cloud, the paddles commenced sending the spray around, and the port faded insensibly from view.

"Don't cry, madame," said Minnie, whose eyes were overflowing for another's grief. A mother had just seen her daughter for the last time. "Don't cry, dear madame," and she knelt and clasped her hands in both her own (her boy was sleeping in her berth.) "We shall

soon be at Malta, and then you will see your husband, who so anxiously expects you." Here she may be pardoned if a tear fell for herself; this chord jarred on her heart, but she checked the vain dream, and awoke to comfort another.

On—on they sailed with wind and tide, until night set in, and then the former suddenly changed, and a high sea arose. Minnie had lain down dressed beside her boy; her mistress slept in a berth above her. Suddenly there arose a noise more than usual over-head, footsteps, and voices calling fore and aft. She sat up and listened. Some of the ladies slept, others were partially awakened by the noise, and murmuringly called the attendant. Some sat up, the better to listen. Minnie was very pale, but spoke not. At this moment a man appeared at the cabin door; he was in a sailor's heaviest dress, for weathering rough weather. He whispered the attendant, who grew paler; then he crept almost noiselessly in, and commenced putting in and securing, what are called the dead-lights. Then he stole away as he had entered; but, as he mounted the companion ladder, he closed and fastened the door. Minnie did not shriek, but she arose, and, though scarcely able to keep her footing, held on to the side of the berth, and whispered her mistress, "Madame, madame, awake and dress!" The lady started up; just at that moment something crashed on deck, and went over the side. A simultaneous scream burst from all in that cabin; then for an instant, which seemed as an age in duration, there were breathless silence and watching for the expected

signal again, of disaster; but nothing was heard save hurrying footsteps over-head, and the heavy ploughing of the steamer through the waves, which broke with a monotonous sound against the vessel, which seemed like some poor, breathing, overwhelmed animal, struggling for its life. After this moment's suspense, wherein every ear expected to be startled by some fierce cry of despair, all in that cabin looked from one to another in terror. This lasted another minute—then one, endowed with a sudden desire to fly the gloomy silence of that almost dark cabin, where only one small lamp flickered to and fro in the centre, sprang up the ladder and endeavoured to open the door; but it resisted all her efforts. With a wild cry she shook it madly; then, struggling in her fear, fell headlong downwards, and lay on the floor, terrifying the inmates of that prison-house by her shrieks of wild, hysterical agony. Some rose, some kneeled and prayed, with trembling upraised hands. Others were too lifeless to think, but leaned stupefied against the side of the cabin. One woman lay still—perfectly still, and beside her were two beautiful sleeping children; her pale lips alone breathed a prayer for mercy, as she clasped both to her bosom. Minnie had awakened her mistress, whose personal attendant was too much alarmed to think except of herself; and Tremenhere's deserted wife, with her boy clasped in one arm to her heart, yet found courage with the other to enfold the almost paralyzed lady, and breathe words of hope; and thus the vessel toiled on with its death-expecting cargo. For nearly an hour, it seemed as if for

one plunge she took despairingly forward, she was driven double the distance back again; assuredly she made no way in that heavy sea. At length there was a pause, as though she had some impossible wave to cut through; every heart stood still; then her sides creaked and heaved; the timbers seemed like complaining spirits. She had had both wind and tide against her; in an instant, as if by magic, she appeared to swing round, with her head to the wind, and onward she flew, like a soul loosened from bondage, and seeking its haven of rest. She was returning to Marseilles. It was a race for life; but, like many an overwrought gallant steed, her strength failed where her spirit upheld. Onward she dashed, and one wild shriek mingled with the severing crash, as "L'Hirondelle" broke upon the rocks, her crew was powerless to keep her off, and went to pieces in that dark, dreary night.

It is not our province, even though we portray a true scene, to speak of all in that doomed steamer; it is with Minnie we have to buffet over the waves of that dark sea, in a small boat, into which many—far too many, had crowded. Her child was clasped in a grasp like death, (for only that could have parted them,) to her shivering breast powerless to warm it, while its faint cry broke in agony on her stricken heart. Still she hoped; she knew something more than human force would be requisite to separate her from her infant, strained as it was to her bosom. So the shivering mother sat still, uncomplaining in her anguish, and thus they drifted on in that laden boat. Morning broke, and the boat was keel

uppermost, riding on a calm sea; to that keel clung two living beings, the mother and child, yet the latter scarcely lived. The tone of that little voice was a faint murmur of expiring nature, which echoed in a heavy sob from the mother's heart, as she clung to the keel in almost despairing hope, and thus they drifted to and fro, a mockery of life, so nigh death they seemed on that calm sea, until her benumbed hand, for one grasped her child, could scarcely cling on, and insensibility was stealing over both, slowly and gradually, so much so that it seemed as a dream, two rough, but friendly arms, lifting her into a boat, where she was gently laid at the bottom on sails and coats, and covered up carefully from the spray, which dashed over her, as in playfulness. What means of restoration they had at hand, were supplied by those rough nurses, two fishermen on the Marseilles coast, who, quitting their toil for that day, sailed in, as quickly as possible, to their humble village-home, of a few poor cottages up the coast. A long, insensible sleep was Minnie's, when she was laid in the cotter's bed. Her long, fair hair hung in heavy, damp masses on the coverlet, and on her bosom lay the living thing she still clasped in her straining arms, loving almost unto death. It was nearly two long days before she awoke to perfect consciousness, to find herself tended with care and every kindness their poverty could afford, by the two men who had rescued her, and who, calling in a woman from a neighbouring hut, placed the mother and child under her care. Her first awakening was a loud cry of terror, as in a horrid dream she saw the

past, and her first thought was her boy. Startled by her cry, the woman ceased a low monotonous song she was singing, to lull an infant to sleep with by the fire. Minnie sprang from the bed towards her, and in an instant memory gave her back all; for one doubting moment she held her child at arm's length to recall the features, then folding those arms in gentle, but strong hold around it, she sunk tremblingly on her knees, and the fair veil of hair sweeping the ground, made her seem a spirit from another world, in purity and holiness, as, raising her streaming eyes upwards, her lips murmured in deep, heartfelt gratitude—"Oh, I am not worthy of so much mercy! so great a blessing! teach me to deserve it!"

And her tears baptized anew her child, spared from death.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH her memory and return to life, came a strange desire over Minnie's heart. She learned by the inquiries of the fisherman, that almost all on board the ill-fated Hirondelle had been lost. Only one or two of the passengers, and a few of the crew, had been picked up. Her sorrow was keen and heart-rending, on hearing that the lady whom she had vainly endeavoured to save, was amongst the lost—all were reported so, except the few we have named; and one of the men returning from Marseilles one day, brought her a paper containing a list of those lost, or supposed to be; and almost the first name she read there was, "Madame Tremenhere, and child." Her first feeling was a shudder, as she thought of what might have been. Then an idea rushed through her brain of, "What would Miles's feelings be should he read this? Would he regret her?—still hate her? Or, his once strong love reviving, would he remember her only through that medium, and sorrow over her fate?"

"Should he," she mentally said, "what heartfelt joy it would be to seek him, and, casting myself at his feet, pray him to take me once again to his arms and heart!"

This thought gave rise to the earnest desire of proving him. This task did not seem difficult or impossible. Her humble friends were not of that class to carry the news of her existence far and wide; her name, too, was unknown to them. More than thanks she had little to give, reserving to herself in some hereafter, to reward them amply. Her object was to gain Paris once again, and then ponder upon the best means of carrying out her project; it seemed to her as a last hope. The only articles of value she possessed were a watch and chain, which her ill-fated mistress had given her the day before they sailed. On these, her late friends, the fishermen, had raised her a sum of money in Marseilles; a small sum she forced upon them, and with the remainder, after purchasing a few absolute necessaries, the still hoping woman left, unrecognized, for Paris. She had confided to her friends a wish to be unknown, until she reached her relatives, and thus a passport was obtained in the name of Deval. With her she took the paper containing the list of passengers supposed to be lost, and thus she started for Paris.

Minnie had not calculated all in doing this; she overlooked, in her haste to put a last hope of reconciliation in practice, the grief many might feel. But it was done, and thought came afterwards. She knew that, by sending the paper to Tremenhere's artist-friend, in Paris, it assuredly would reach him, directed to himself; consequently, on her arrival, her first act was to seek the box of one of those curiously occupied persons in that large city, who sit at the corners of some streets, and,

for a trifle, write letters for the illiterate or mysterious. Here she got her paper addressed to Tremenhere, to his friend's care, in a strange hand, and sent it by a porter, with an order to leave it in the *loge de concièrge*, without answering any questions, merely inquiring if they knew the address of the gentleman. The man returned to her, and said—

"The person to whom it was addressed, was daily expected in Paris, and it should be given to him." Her heart bounded with a joy, long a stranger to it, at this information; all seemed to favour her scheme. Then, however, for the first time she sat down to reflect, and thought of Mary's certain grief—Dorcas—Skaife—all, perhaps; but she consoled herself with the reflection—"It will not be for long: Miles will come to Paris—when he receives the paper, he will go to Mary. I will watch for him near her house, and his friend's; and when I see his fine head bowed in sorrow, I will bid it raise itself up, rejoicing!"

And with this idea she took a small, almost garret, within view of his friend's residence, and through the *concièrge*, and at shops obtained some work, whereby to support life, and her dearer than own—that of Tremenhere's child's.

Miles had remained at Florence, in retirement and bitterness, until his feelings outwore themselves. He wanted fuel to feed his thoughts against Minnie. He was tormented in soul; for sometimes a till then silent monitor awoke, and said—

"You were perhaps too hasty—you had no proof, but

presumptive evidence—the most deceiving of any: return to Paris." And his fate took him by the hand, and led him thither.

Before Minnie brought the newspaper to Paris, the journals, both there and in England, were teeming with accounts of the loss of the "Hirondelle," and a list given of the passengers' names. Who may depict the heavy gloom which fell upon her family at Gatestone, when her name, coupled with her infant's, appeared amongst those lost! Dorcas was almost broken-hearted. If Minnie could have seen her, she would indeed have regretted the *ruse* of a moment, which could cause so much bitter anguish to one she loved—she would no longer accuse her aunt of coldness, but rather have pitied that want of energy, which made her seem what she was not. On Juvenal and Sylvia, too, it fell heavily, but in a different manner. On him, it awakened remorse and gloom for unjust severity, and a consequent hatred towards those who had urged him to it. He would not listen to the name of Burton, or Dalby, without violent passion, followed by almost tears; and this feeling was constantly awakened by Sylvia, who became more acrimonious in proportion as her conscience told her she had taken a good part in the oppression of her poor niece; and her greatest satisfaction was in torturing others.

Dorcas and Skaife were the two who, in almost silence, bore the heaviest burthen; they spoke of her to one another, but beyond this, they were silent. Dorcas crept about her home in quiet grief; every

little object which had belonged to Minnie was gradually taken from public gaze, to be treasured up in her own saddened room, and there she would sit for hours, looking upon them, and recalling when and how Minnie employed them.

The old hall clock ticked no more: this was Juvenal's act—it awakened such painful feelings whenever its tongue proclaimed the hour; so one day, unknown to any one, he sent early for a carpenter, and the friend of years was consigned to a lumber-room!—*à propos*, this is too often the fate of old, tried friends, who would recall us to thought and duty by reminding us of wasted hours!

Mrs. Gillett had but one phrase in her sorrow to cut Juvenal to the soul; and this was—

"I told you something bad would come of all your severity! Poor darling!—only for your cruelty she might be smiling amongst us now, and her blessed, crowing babby!" She spoke of it as if it had been a young game-cock. "And to think," she continued, "that that pretty creatur', long hair and all, has become food for fishes! There—never don't send no more into this house; for, as long as I'm in it, none sha'n't be cooked, I can tell you!"

And the poor woman, having thus energetically delivered herself of her opinions, would creep away, and, shutting the door of her pleasant-looking room, sit rocking to and fro, crying, as she would fancy she again beheld Minnie and her handsome Tremenhere there, side by side.

The authorities at Marseilles were written to, and all confirmed the sad news; some few had been rescued, but nothing had been heard of Minnie, except that the boat in which she and others had escaped from the wreck, was found keel uppermost by a steamer. The fishermen far on the coast, had little intercourse with the town; and then Minnie had implored secresy at their hands, and her wishes were obeyed. Mary, too, wrote to Skaife in broken-heartedness. Nothing was wanting to confirm it; and, just when all else were in their sorrow, Tremenhere arrived in Paris. While at Florence, he had heard that Lord Randolph was cruising in a yacht in the Mediterranean. This partially urged his return to France—a fear of meeting *them.* He felt he should not be master of himself were such to take place; so strong on his mind was the idea of their being together. Yet, too, sometimes a doubt arose; and, to clear up all, he returned to France—he could not rest. His first idea was to go direct to Mary's, and inquire about her in seeming indifference; then he changed his intention, and went hastily to his friend's. This man was from home when Miles arrived, so he went to his studio and awaited his return. Miles was one of those whose busy mind ever found employment for the fingers; he could not sit down patiently and wait, doing nothing—the busy thoughts when the mind is in trouble, become too acute then. Thus he looked round the studio—to read was impossible — taking a blank sheet of pasteboard, he placed it on an easel, and commenced sketching. He

was not thinking willingly of Minnie; but somehow she was the spirit of the man's innermost soul. Beneath his pencil grew two figures—a Madonna and child, lightly sketched. Something passed over his heart like a footstep in a deserted hall, and echoed. He laid down the pencil, and brushing back his hair with a hasty hand, resumed the pencil, but reversed the sketch, and commenced another—as he did so, a step sounded without. He started up; it was his friend—friend to him, and a worthy man, which made him the more severe towards Minnie, supposing her so faithless. The cordial grasp of friendship given, his friend said,—

"Oh! I've got some letters and papers for you, which have come recently," and he hastened to seek them. Miles's heart beat high. They most probably, in some manner, related to the overflowing thought of his heart. He took them with trembling hands from the other, and scrutinized them all; a cold feeling of disappointment filled his heart—not a line in her handwriting!—then she was truly lost, and indifferent to him! All this time the other was gazing at him with an embarrassed look, not knowing when or how to commence—something he had to give utterance to; this look had come over him immediately after their first salutation. Miles tore open the Marseilles paper, and flung it down with a "pshaw." The name caught his friend's eye, and he took it up. As he did so, Miles, to conceal his disappointed look, hastily seated himself at the easel, and commenced finishing his sketch. "Look," he said, "Duplin, this is the model of the sweet villa where I have been so-

journing often, in Florence—I must return—already I grow weary in France!" In good truth, he looked so; he was pale, careworn, and his smile passed like a breath on glass, leaving a dark, dim vapour behind.

"Tremenhere," said the other at last, "have you heard aught of madame, lately?"

The question made his hand tremble.

"No," he replied, continuing his sketch. "How should I? Have you?" and he looked up wistfully.

"Nor of *ce milord?*" asked Duplin, again interrogatively, without replying to his demand.

"He is in the Mediterranean," answered Miles bitterly, "cruising in a yacht."

"Then it *was* the case," fell from his friend's lip, as if in self-satisfaction, at a doubt solved.

"What?" cried Miles, looking up hastily; "speak out, I can bear it—I suspect all, from the reports I have heard."

"Well, then, after you left I resolved to discover all; I deemed it right towards you, and also a satisfaction, where madame would fain have seemed so wronged. I found out that milord went to Italy and the Mediterranean, and shortly afterwards madame quitted Paris for England; but this must have been a *ruse* to mislead, for she was recently in Marseilles with her child."

Tremenhere groaned aloud at the thoughts this communication awakened; there was something so bitter in the memory of all the happiness her supposed infamy had cost him, wife, child, home—all but a vain dream.

"And thence," continued Duplin, anxious, by fortifying

his (Miles's) heart with contempt for her, to prepare him to receive calmly the intelligence he had gained through the public prints, "madame with her child, sailed the other day for *the Mediterranean* for Malta; in fact, where I last heard of milord's yacht."

"True!" ejaculated Miles through his closed teeth, as he bent over his sketch.

"And now, *mon ami*," added the other hurriedly, "I have something more to tell you. I do not think you need much courage to hear it; for after all, 'tis better, far better thus."

"What would you tell me, Duplin? speak?" and he looked up perfectly unconscious of the truth.

"Well then, Tremenhere, you are free; madame is dead!"

"Dead!" exclaimed Miles, starting up pale and rigid; and, strange contradiction of the thought which the other endeavoured to convey to his mind, the fair, living Minnie seemed to stand before him.

"Be a man!" said Duplin, soothingly; "think how false she was; think how painful a tie—of the disgrace!" and he grasped his arm.

"Where did she die?" asked Miles, passing his hand over his brow to collect his thoughts; for he was in a stupor, not understanding really what the other meant to convey to him.

"She was lost; the vessel was wrecked going to Malta," answered Duplin, who had unfolded the Marseilles paper, and, suspecting the contents sent by some unknown hand, placed the open sheet before the stupe-

fied Tremenhere on the easel. Gradually the glazed eyes fell upon the page, and the names stood out bold and clear before him, "Madame Tremenhere (*Anglaise*) *et son enfant*," he dropped silently on the seat, and, shading his eyes, gazed on the sheet motionless and speechless.

"Be yourself—be a man!" said Duplin, once more touching his arm.

"I am!" cried Tremenhere, in a hoarse but steady voice, looking up. "I rejoice; better know her dead, than *his!*" and he rose and strode across the room. "I do rejoice, Duplin; see, my hand even does not tremble. Now I can bear my sorrow; now the world is one huge blank before me. I have lost that leper spot which was tainting all my flesh; I have no past, no present, no future—all is alike a blank. I can walk on in the darkness, nor fear to meet her form at every step!"

Duplin stood awed by his calmness, it seemed so terrific over those young graves. "Who can have sent that paper?" he asked, taking the journal in his hand.

"An enemy; but I guess him. I defy them all now! They can wound no more—my wound is cleansed, and healed; I defy them! the plague spot has left me! Rejoice Duplin, rejoice!"

When he went forth from that house, his step was exact, the brow stern and cold, but untroubled, the mouth compressed and calm, and the pale woman closely veiled, who was concealed in a gateway watching the exit of him whom she had seen enter Duplin's abode, felt her hopeful heart loosen all its chords, and wellnigh

burst in its sorrow, as she failed to read one regret on that face of stone. She knew he must have received the paper which told him all, and now indeed she felt he had never loved her—all was lost. She had but three things to comfort her; first, her own upright conscience, her boy, and the morbid satisfaction of being indeed dead to all, lone, and uncomforted, and thus she crept back to her gloomy garret.

Once again she saw Miles; her dress touched him in the half-lighted street at night. He was cold, unmoved, as before. She stretched a hand to touch him; his name was on her lips; but he passed on, and the whispered word died away in a hysterical sob.

Next day he quitted for England, without seeking any communication with Mary, and Minnie remained to weep and toil.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUR months passed away, and February, with its cold assumption of earliest spring, found a crowd of fashionables assembled in the French capital; and, amongst others, Lady Ripley, Lady Lysson, and Lady Dora.

It would be impossible to convey to many minds, or easily describe, the chilling effect which pride, and a luxuriously-indulged fashionable existence, throw over a heart which otherwise might have been warm, generous, and loving. Lady Dora was painfully shocked when she heard of Minnie's death; but then she had her mother's cold reasonings to soothe her grief.

"Minnie had disgraced her family; her name had, since her unfortunate marriage, been brought in question. Assuredly, though Mr. Tremenhere had hushed slander by resolution, yet Minnie must have given some room for it! It was very unfortunate that she had ever been known, by the publicity he had given at the club, as his wife; and perhaps some day, as a relative of their's—for people always *will* inquire who's who? Therefore they must, of course, for decency sake, put [illegible]urning. Perhaps it was better so to do; it would [illegible]hisperings, as it was known to many that the

husband and wife had been separated before her death. Something, too, was rumoured, of a duel having been fought; but as no public scandal had been given by a divorce, an assumption of sorrow would appear in favour of her memory, should the truth ever become known!"

So Lady Ripley and her daughter swept the floors of their hotel in Paris (whither they had gone, to seek oblivion of sorrow in change of scene) in robes of sombre hue, craped and bugled with jet, and only in a very quiet soirée permitted themselves to be "at home" or "abroad."

Tremenhere had been a favourite in Florence before his marriage, with many a high dame; that event threw a partial veil over him: he grew domestic.

Now he came forth again in a new character. In the first state he had an absorbing idea—his mother's fame; this was his guiding star. With Minnie's supposed fall, this fell too; it "sought the sea," and was engulfed.

Tremenhere now was a thoroughly heartless, reckless man. Without hope, present or future, he lived for the moment. At first he hesitated, in the candour of his heart, even to wear mourning for Minnie; then a thought—a more generous one to the dead—arose; he forgave her, and would spare her memory from calumny, by any act of his, so glaring in disrespect. As the pale, interesting widower, one whose fate had been so mysterious—one ejected from his high estate by his parents' error—he became the fashionable rage, the pet artist, the sought-after guest; and the man *submitting* to all, courted nothing, for nothing moved him.

It will not be our province to betray beforehand Lady Dora's heart—let it work its own way, and shew itself. Lady Ripley could not close her doors against Tremenhere, without risking scandal to her relative's memory, should any busy tongue ever proclaim she had been such to them; besides, he was the fashion, and received every where, as more than an artist even of fame, as a man who ranked their equal by birth, though a cloud now obscured him. Burton had never been a favourite in society, and not a few hoped yet to see Tremenhere restored to his home. So Lady Ripley did the more prudent thing, received him with something approaching to cordiality. Moreover, he was every where; not to receive him, would be to shut fashion out of doors. No portrait was perfect unless he painted it, no bust a model unless he chiseled it; and the man walked among all like a soul in transmigration, seeking the one hidden thing, which should bid it back to the heaven it had lost, and was striving to regain.

"Come here, you dreadful man!" exclaimed Lady Lysson, as he entered her apartments one day in the Hotel Mirabeau, "and account for yourself. Here is Lady Dora complaining bitterly that her portrait, as '*Diane Chasseresse*,' will never be completed! I shame to hear so bad an account of my protegé."

"Lady Lysson," he said, taking her cordially proffered hand, "I cannot plead guilty; the fault is Lady Dora Vaughan's. Three days have I placed it upon my easel, and, after impatiently awaiting her ladyship to give

me a sitting, have been compelled to remove it for some other claimant."

"What have you to answer to this charge, Lady Dora?" asked the lively hostess with mock gravity, appealing to the lady, who was sitting at another table sketching when Tremenhere entered, and who had received him as usual with a constrained air, merely bowing.

"I reply," answered that lady, "that my mother, having been particularly engaged, it was impossible for me to wait upon Mr. Tremenhere; and indeed, dear Lady Lysson, you are well aware I have not complained of the delay. It is a matter of indifference to me, the completion of that portrait."

"I declare you are ungracious enough to induce Mr. Tremenhere to cast the care of it off his hands, and but that I have its perfecting at heart, before my truant nephew's return from afar, to gladden his eyes with, I should advise him to leave Diane *à la chasse* for ever, and unfinished."

If the allusion to Lord Randolph made him wince, no eye saw it. As soon as the discussion between the ladies commenced, he had very coolly seated himself in a corner of the sofa; and with pencil and paper was silently sketching Lady Lysson's spaniel, which lay before the fire. Lady Ripley, too, had apartments in the Hotel Mirabeau—consequently, the ladies were as one family. We have seen before, the desire of the two families for an union between Lady Dora and Lord Randolph—a marriage now equally sought for by the

gentleman. Though Minnie's death had affected him much, yet he knew not all the circumstances of the case; and, in truth, he was so innocent of any wrong towards her, that the memory soon passed away. On Tremenhere he looked as upon a sort of madman, really being incapable to dive into the recesses of a heart so filled with love, and its *ever-accompanying* pang—jealousy; and he was now daily expected in Paris to plead his own cause with Lady Dora, who had, unpromising any thing, alone consented, at his aunt's request, to sit for "La Diane," *nominally* for herself.

There was a feeling of deep repulsion in Lady Dora's heart towards Lord Randolph. Thinking, as she did, that he had at the very least sought to compromise her cousin—if in truth he had not done so—knowing, as she also did, that he and Tremenhere had met in a hostile manner, she felt any thing but easy at the inevitable meeting between them now, courted and sought after as the latter was every where, for his exalted talent, manners, wit, when he pleased, and a certain romance about him, which made him a hero—and what were his feelings at the prospect of seeing Lord Randolph? They were part of a whole of sorrow and suffering. He was resolved to fly nothing which might still more harden his heart; he would apply the iron to every part till he burned out and scarred the vitality still in it. He had but one desire—total callousness—that thus he might find peace; and before the world he had attained that wish—but in the privacy of his own room, unseen, un-

heard, who might tell the agony he endured? Something of this Lady Dora suspected; and beneath that pride-encased heart there was a woman's thought for him. She could not but respect him, and she dreaded him now more than ever—and this dread made her desire ardently the return of Lord Randolph, that she might *endeavour* to meet the wishes of all, and, becoming his wife, place him in barrier between Tremenhere and herself; but her fortification would not be a very strong one where her own heart was more than half traitor. Lord Randolph, too, knew Tremenhere was in Paris; but, as nothing forced him to remain, he presumed the meeting would have nothing very painful for him. He looked upon it in this light: that in life, more than once, it has happened, that the law's divorcing power has made wives strangers to their husbands; and society, backed by the rules of etiquette and politeness, has brought these same husbands into almost daily intercourse, without collision—thus he felt it would be between Tremenhere and himself. There was something of a jealous pang, a memory of past insinuations, which made him wish to secure Lady Dora at once—all his love, as *he* knew that passion, had revived for her. Now we will resume our narrative, where we left Miles sketching the dog.

"Mr. Tremenhere," cried Lady Lysson, "why don't you speak, and assist me in fighting your battles?"

"Mine? Lady Lysson!" he exclaimed, looking up. "Pardon me; I am compelled, though in gratitude for

the intention doubtless, on your part, to disavow them as such. It has not been to oblige me, however pleasant the task, that Lady Dora sat for her portrait."

"I am tired of the subject," uttered that lady, pettishly curling her haughty lip, and at the same time etching her sketch with a hasty pen.

"I am perfectly ashamed of the length of time I have expended in pourtraying your beauties, Tiney," said Tremenhere, gravely shaking his head, "when I am compelled to notice the energy with which Lady Dora sketches her——What *is* Lady Dora sketching?" he asked, rising slowly from his quiet seat, and crossing towards her. As he did so, however, pausing an instant before Lady Lysson, and dropping her favourite's picture in her outstretched hand, with—

"An offering, Lady Lysson, though not by a Landseer. May I look at your labour?" he asked, gently leaning over Lady Dora's chair. She felt his warm breath on her bent neck, and her cheek coloured. She tried to persuade herself it was indignation at his cool audacity, and indifference to her haughtiness; but her heart rejected the excuse, for Tremenhere was her equal, and now received every where as one thrown by accident, or roguery, from his allotted sphere. Even the least liberal could not speak of him as one raised above his real position. She felt herself colouring, and felt also that his eyes were bent upon her; and, hastily tearing the etching in two, cast it aside, saying—

"Pshaw! Mr. Tremenhere; my child's play could

…meet a person of your genius; and I am too …
…play second to any one!"

…never could," he said, gallantly taking up …
…and rejoining them.

…leave, Lady Dora, I never saw you so cross in …
…cried the gentle-tempered, lively Lady Lu…

…what has Mr. Tremenhere done to offend you?" She paused …
…could really take you for two——"

…and awkwardly—"children," she added, rather …
…felt the word she had omitted.

…looks like a sketch of an early scene in the …
…," he said, not appearing to notice the pause …
…which the other lady had made. "A hunting suit, and …
…it is so: here is the quicket hedge, the …
…hall in the distance. Lady Dora, you have a …
…memory—a clear vision—a skilful …
…," and he fixed his eye full on her …
…meet, and in that schooled look …
…past in reference to herself—an …
…in it—who might have read …
…that moment was gnawing …
…For it was on that …
…for her; 'twas …
…Lady Dora …
…her; for she …
…upbraided her …
…moment, which …
…that in all her …
…almost a …
…What …

many ways lead me to suppose I am not an object
ference to him? And what must I seem to him,
to cross a glance with him, engendering thought-
ul dreaming?"

Then vanity, the ruling queen of earth, whispered, "He loved you before he saw her, or his half-uttered words were traitors; and, if she proved unworthy the love he gave her *in pique*, why should he regret her loss?"

"You are thoughtful, Lady Dora," he said gently, taking a seat beside her.

"I was going to make the same remark," cried Lady Lysson, who overheard the words, though the tone was so very low. "I declare English girls bring English hearts every where, and are always gloomy or sentimental."

"Do not accuse me of the latter!" exclaimed Lady Dora, starting up, and shaking of the incubus overwhelming her; "I beg to disclaim all acquaintance with so missy-ish a creation as mawkish sentiment."

"You are quite right, my dear," answered the other lady; "I know nothing more dreadful than a bread and butter miss. If a man but look at her, she drops her eyes and blushes; she disowns any thing so dreadful as a corn; consequently all accidental treadings on the toe, make her heart flutter, and become so many gentle avowals of love, oddly enough conveyed though they may be."

"I disagree with your ladyship," said Miles, "about the oddity of the act; 'tis wittily imagined, for, in doing so, a man stoops to conquer!"

"Oh, dreadful!" cried Lady Lysson; "but, to continue

never interest a person of your genius; and I am too proud to play second to any one!"

"*That* you never could," he said, gallantly taking up the pieces, and rejoining them.

"I declare, Lady Dora, I never saw you so cross in my life!" cried the gentle-tempered, lively Lady Lysson. "What has Mr. Tremenhere done to offend you? One would really take you for two——" She paused, suddenly and awkwardly—"children," she added, colouring. *Both* felt the word she had omitted.

"This looks like a sketch of an early scene of my boyhood," he said, not appearing to notice the pause which the other lady had made. "A holly field!—true, it is so: here is the quickset hedge, the old stile, and the hall in the distance. Lady Dora, you have a faithful memory—a clear vision—a skilful pen: may I keep this?" and he fixed his eye full upon her. Their eyes met, and in that schooled look, speaking only of the past in reference to herself—not a shade of bitter regret in it—who might have read that only one thought at that moment was gnawing at his heart—his lost Minnie? For it was on that stile he had sat full often, watching for her; 'twas there she came the night they fled. Lady Dora dropped her eyes, and a shudder passed over her; for she, too, saw Minnie before her, and her heart upbraided her for more than the weakness of the present moment, which was insensibly stealing over her. She felt that, in all her sorrow, she had not acted the part of one, almost a sister to that poor girl; and she asked herself, "What can this man's heart be, to forget so soon, and

by so many ways lead me to suppose I am not an object of indifference to him? And what must I seem to him, even to cross a glance with him, engendering thoughtful dreaming?"

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"Oh, dreadful!" cried Lady Lysson; "but, to continue

my sketch. If you speak to her of any one particular flower, even if it were the humble daisy itself, she would mow a field to obtain a sufficient quantity to convince you, you were most completely understood, and sympathized with; and as to colours—why, you could make a cameleon of her, every hour different in hue, if it so pleased you."

"What, if you played 'cat's cradle' with her, Lady Lysson? you once spoke feelingly to me on this same subject."

"What did I say? Oh, now I remember—I spoke of my poor Lysson, and myself, and——"

"You advised me not to play at the game with Lady Dora—now I like *daring* all, Lady Dora; will you show me how you play 'cat's cradle?'" and he took a piece of twisted silk from the table.

"I don't know the game," she answered coldly.

"I daresay Lady Lysson will instruct us; will you not?" and he held the silk towards her.

"Willingly, beneath my own eye," she replied.

"Not beyond?"

"No! Lady Dora might use her feline qualities upon you."

"Oh! I should little care," he answered pointedly, "to alter slightly the words of a talented, most unfortunate, and I believe most innocent woman, Madame Laffarge, if Lady Dora scratch me like a cat, so she will but love me like a dog."

There was a dead silence of a moment—Lady Dora interrupted it by an allusion to the first portion of his speech, not seeming to have noticed the latter.

"Do you believe Madame Laffarge was innocent?"

"I believe all so, till proved otherwise. There was no proof but presumptive evidence against her; and she was surrounded by deceit and enemies."

"Too often the case with many an innocent woman who has been falsely condemned!" ejaculated Lady Lysson, partially ignorant of Tremenhere's history.

Lady Dora blushed painfully. The conversation had glided imperceptibly into this channel—how stop the current?

"Right," he said calmly; "but in some cases a demon, or guilt alone, can collect this evidence. If we condemn, we do so innocently in the former case; and assuredly full many a crown of martyrdom has been more lightly won, than a woman's, thus condemned, thus punished!"

Nothing seemed to touch him. Lady Dora had shuddered as this strange conversation commenced; for none there better than herself knew how much poor Minnie had suffered. She was lost in wonder at Tremenhere's sternness of heart; and yet, as a lioness loves her mate, so her proud, almost unwomanly nature, admired this man's, daily, more and more.

"We forget 'cat's cradle!'" he cried, almost boyishly. "Lady Lysson, behold my willing hands."

And, laughingly, that lady adjusted the silk on his fingers, and, drawing Lady Dora's trembling hand towards him, commenced the task of teaching them. Child's play is foolish for two who should not fall in love; for so much more is done in innocence, than the

mature heart can calmly bear unmoved. People are thrown off their guard, and then some watchful sprite is sure to step in with his assistance. Lady Lysson taught them, and at last even Lady Dora laughingly joined in the caprice of a moment's childishness. Their fingers came in contact—(a thing much better avoided, where the woman's weakening heart needs every possible bulwark to keep out Love. He is very apt to glide into the citadel in a gentle pressure of thrilling joy; but if not accomplished the *first* time, the besieged has nothing to fear; in these cases, "*ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*")—and while puzzling unnecessarily over her silken entanglements, he found time to press her for another sitting for *Diane* soon.

"Let it be to-morrow—shall it, Lady Dora?" he asked, as Lady Lysson drew her attention elsewhere, to scold 'Tiney,' who was tearing the leaves of a book dropped on the floor.

"Well, yes; to-morrow," uttered Lady Dora gently, as he held her hands imprisoned by the silken cord. She did not withdraw them, so he stooped, with the quiet gentleness peculiar to himself, and touched the prisoners with his lip. She started, but did not utter a word.

"You are tired of our child's play," he said; "let me release your hands. Lady Lysson, a thousand thanks for your teaching; you did well in cautioning me against it with Lady Dora—I shall remember it!" And rising, a glance fell on her, and this was scarcely more than one of respect and interest: shaking Lady

Lysson warmly by the hand, he bowed merely to the other, and said—"Then to-morrow, Lady Dora, I may expect you?"

She bowed, and he quitted the room.

"What an exceedingly awkward turn the conversation took!" cried Lady Lysson as he left. "It was a most painful thing that affair about his wife, which has ever appeared involved, to me, in some strange mystery. How was it, my dear? I asked Randolph about it before he quitted England, and he said Mr. Tremenhere was jealous of his own shadow; and this was all the satisfaction I received."

It will be seen Lady Lysson was totally ignorant of the relationship existing between Minnie and Lady Dora. Lord Randolph had, for his own sake, as a suitor to the latter, hushed it up as much as possible.

"There was something strange about it!" dropped from Lady Dora, with perfect self-possession; she was again herself.

"There must have been some indiscretion on her part," continued the other, even charitable as she was, "for they were separated some time before her unhappy death. I heard,"—here she lowered her voice—"that Randolph had flirted with her, and this excited Mr. Tremenhere's jealousy, and that subsequently he discovered a decided intrigue elsewhere, and shot, or dangerously wounded the lover. I admired him for it; for, though it may be wrong, 'tis more natural than a cold-blooded divorce and damages: it always seems to me like making a fortune of one's own dishonour!"

"I doubt whether Lord Randolph really were guilty of seeking the lady's dishonour," answered Lady Dora; though she *thought* it herself, she would not admit any thing to another, so galling to her vanity.

"'My lord, beware of jealousy!'" quoted Lady Lysson laughing. "Don't be alarmed; a reformed rake makes the best husband, they say."

"I should be sorry to try one," was the dry rejoinder. "The reformation is too often skin deep, and they always make suspicious husbands, severe fathers—look around at all our neighbours!"

"But I defend Randolph from the charge of being one; he is a black swan," said his aunt.

"Oh, that example of a *rara avis* is no longer orthodox!" cried the other smiling. "We have many specimens of them, and, to my thinking, they are over fond of seeking crumbs of comfort at the hands of the fair sex, if we take for example those on the Serpentine, to make perfect, and exclusively loving mates."

"Come, I will not have a word against my Randolph, even *sous entendu*, in epigrams. I have set my heart on his subduing yours, and giving me a right to call you my dear niece."

"I thank you for the cordial wish, dear Lady Lysson; we shall see—*à propos*, I have promised Mr. Tremenhere a sitting for *Le Diane* to-morrow, will you accompany me?—or mamma?"

"Oh, I will, gladly! I delight in that man's society; and he is so very reserved towards women, so totally devoid of love-making, except *par badinage*—that one

feels quite comfortable in cultivating the acquaintance—I speak as relates to you young marrying girls."

"Stop, stop Lady Lysson! you are too fascinating, too young at heart, to exclude yourself from love's attacks yet."

"My dear girl, I have played 'cat's cradle' once too often, ever to attempt it again. I could not unravel the very simplest;" she looked down and thought of "poor Lysson," as she ever termed him. Lady Dora looked down too, and began to think *she* had played rather too earnestly *once* at "cat's cradle," and would not resume it again.

CHAPTER XIII.

TREMENHERE was in his studio alone—that is, free from living witnesses; but what crowding memories were around him! Here he was himself; not the man seeking oblivion of the past, in society with which he had no fellowship of soul, but the stern, sobered being, whose peace of mind seemed wrecked for ever, and on a rock so minute in appearance, as an "if!" Ever before him stood this word, blistering his eyesight.

Had he been *assured* of Minnie's infidelity, nothing could have induced him to meet Lord Randolph; as it was, he had a feverish desire to see him, as though in his eyes, by some superhuman power, he could read the whole truth, and either cast her memory for ever from him, or else sit down with every thought of her, collected around him like household gods, on his hearth, and live with them, cherish them, and, stilling the beating of his heart, bid it break amidst them, like a shattered, valueless vase, whose rich essences were poured upon the ground.

"But she *was* false!" he cried, pacing the floor with hasty steps. "What fiend could ever have weaved together in one web, so much black evidence against her? And what a face she had to cover her lie with! Who

could have doubted her—her smile, her clear, seraphic eye! Minnie, 'twas madness to love as I did; and, far more than that, to lose you even, even *if* you were false! Why could I not have closed my heart against all evidence? Why not have known sooner, that *nothing* here is perfect! Her mad fancy passed, she *might* have loved me again—she *did* love me once! Love me again! —love me again! and could I have waited for that love's return, as we watch the healthful glow coming back to the pale cheek we cherish? Oh no, no, no!—not *that!* To sit and watch the silent tear, to feel the form shrink from our kindly enfolding; and at last see repulsion become toleration—toleration, patience—patience, friendship, and the heart pause there? Oh no, no! better ten thousand times separation and death!" He stopped, and then creeping silently across that large room, drew back a curtain hanging before a niche, and in this was a statue in marble. It was Minnie—Minnie in her desolation! The face was still, hopeless life; every feature perfection; but disenchantment sat over all, stealing away its life! She stood leaning against a broken pillar—fitting emblem of her fate. The forehead was pressed against the left arm; the heavy plaits of hair, as she had often worn them, looped down the side of her face, hung forward, shewing all the pale chiseling of that hopeless agony there depicted. The whole body denoted utter prostration; and the right arm drooped powerless at her side, holding by its stem a cup reversed! It was an inspiration of memory; and beneath, at its base, was inscribed, "Life's Chalice." It

was one of those magically wrought creations which thrill the soul when we look upon them. Tremenhere stood with folded arms contemplating it.

"Night and day—night and day," he murmured, "have I passed to complete my thought, my *dream*—for I dreamed I saw her thus; and how like it is.! What is wanting? the spark of life to make it move and speak to me. Speak to me! No, she would turn away, either in indifference, and love for another, or horror of me! Perhaps I have murdered her!" and the man's voice sank to a hollow whisper—"her, and her infant! Oh, if I have!" and the cold dew stood on his brow at the thought. "What a bitter reckoning there will be against me when they stand before heaven to condemn! Not only here, but hereafter! Never to find peace again, nor rest, nor happy thought? Oh! life is indeed a burthen; and death a terror!" He sank for some time in silent thought before her; then brushing away the dew from his brow, and hastily drawing the curtain before the statue, he turned away. "Poor, weak fool!" he cried contemptuously, "I am not fit to be alone. She *was* false—false to them, the nurses of her childhood—false to me, her loving husband—false to heaven! I will destroy all memory of her." He tore back the curtain, and raised his arm to do so—but the arm fell. "No," he said, turning away, "'tis a work of art—only that; only these have I to spur me over the mountains of sorrow, before I meet death—art and occupation, inactivity would be madness. And she, her cousin!" and he laughed aloud in scorn, "thinks I love her. That having loved Minnie, I could give

even the memory of that affection so base a counterfeit! Heartless, worldly, proud earth-worm!—only this! to place herself beside——But I will not dream of her! If that other had held in her veins one drop of human blood, she would have shielded, upheld, watched over *her*, and she had not been lost. I was too rude a guardian; I loved her with a lion's love, and the shrinking thing, in terror, sought refuge where words were soft, and the hand gentler; but the heart—the heart, his did not love like mine! Mine would have poured out its every drop of life's current, to spare one hair of her fair head from suffering.——I am growing weak—weak—womanly weak," and he moved feverishly about the room, whispering to himself, "I must shake this off, I have a part to play; I must avoid solitude, seek excitement; time may do much, bring oblivion, as it darkens the mental vision. *She* will be here to-day—she who loves to entangle—to wanton with the insect awhile, and then crush it with her heel. Crush me!—me!!" and he laughed aloud. "I will bring her down, in her subdued pride, to acknowledge that she envies even the place in hatred, which her once despised cousin holds in my heart. I will bring her to marry another in hate, and love me in unloved bitterness, and be false to him—*if I will.* I will revenge Minnie, even though I cast her from me—*only I* had a right to condemn and blast her." A bell sounded in the outer chamber. "'Tis she!" he cried. "Not *here yet;* there is a spirit in the place—I have evoked it." And, hastily closing the door, he passed into a *salon* luxuriantly furnished.

In a moment more, Lady Dora entered in all the pride of her glowing, majestic beauty, set off to greater advantage by her mourning robes, which floated in mockery of woe around her—Lady Ripley accompanied her. How false some positions are, in what's called society! Here were three persons, nearly allied, meeting as mere strangers, almost in coldness, without an allusion even to the past. Lady Ripley was gracious; her daughter strove by an unconstrained cordiality, where pride towered in majestic condescension, to seem perfectly indifferent, though Tremenhere smiled in his heart, as he read her well—his manner was so free from any significance of tone or look, so calm and unembarrassed, that Lady Dora asked herself involuntarily, "Have I dreamed the past of yesterday?" and she felt humbled on reflecting how weary an hour she had passed that morning, in schooling her looks and heart to meet, without betraying herself to him.

"You will scarcely pardon me, I fear," he said, "when I tell you, Lady Dora, that I had totally forgotten this engagement this morning, and was going to pass a morning at the Louvre."

"Oh, pray, do not let us detain you, Mr. Tremenhere!" she exclaimed haughtily. "I, too, had other engagements, but mamma wished me to come, having promised."

"You cannot doubt, Lady Dora," he gallantly said—but it was mere gallantry; no hidden tone of meaning could be detected by the nicest ear—"the great pleasure this remembrance gives me. I was blaming my own

wretched memory, and anxious to convey to you the forgotten happiness, which was driving me for a morning's amusement among the dead beauties in the Spanish gallery, instead of immortalizing my pencil, by endeavouring to pourtray your living loveliness."

She bowed, and, biting her lip, accepted this overstrained compliment at its full value—empty as the wind; and in this mood she sat down to lend herself to his pencil. Lady Ripley had not noticed the by-play of all this, indeed how could she, ignorant as she was of the previous scene, and totally incapable of comprehending the possibility of *her* daughter, even condescending to the slightest approach to flirtation even with an artist, whatever his pretensions to birth might be? She was unusually gracious this day, which removed much of the embarrassment the others could not otherwise have failed to feel. As some little revenge for his cool impertinence when they entered, Lady Dora suddenly inquired—

"Mr. Tremenhere, how many days' journey do you reckon it from Paris to Florence? I mean," she added, fearful that her meaning might be misunderstood, "from Florence to Paris, supposing a person to travel as expeditiously as possible?"

"As many," he answered, smiling blandly in her face, and with perfect sincerity of tone, "as it would take a person to go from Paris to Florence."

"Is he a fool?" she thought, "or only insensible? Thank you," she added aloud. "I presume they would be the same, but my question remains unanswered."

"True," he replied, smiling; "I am very rude, but my attention was so engrossed by this most lovely Diana. I will endeavour to answer you: were *I* a happy man, whom one so fair as yourself, Lady Dora, expected impatiently, I should not choose the commonplace mode of transporting myself; but, borrowing the wings of the wind (that is, supposing them disengaged,) flutter to her feet."

"Mr. Tremenhere is pleased to be facetious," answered Lady Dora, pettishly.

"Pardon me, I never was more serious. I am trying to convey to your mind how great my impatience would be; but you have interrupted, without hearing all I had to say. If fate and inclination together, had cast me upon the waters—we will say, for example, in a yacht—why, I would summon to my aid some fairy spell, and, like the peterel, run over the surface of the waters, from the blue Mediterranean to the dusky Seine, till I found myself, web-footed, and incapable of running thence, on the polished floors of your hotel!"

There is nothing more disagreeable than to have taken up a weapon to wound, and suddenly to find the point in your own bosom. She felt he was laughing at her.

"Mamma," she cried, "did Lady Lysson show you a letter she received to-day?"

"My love?" asked her mother, looking up from a book she had been perusing. Lady Dora repeated the question.

"Yes, his lordship wrote much pleased with his cruise."

"I trust Lord Randolph Gray is quite well?" inquired Tremenhere, with perfect composure. "Lady Lysson mentioned, in my presence, that he was shortly expected from Malta."

"Quite well!" ejaculated Lady Dora, amazed at his coolness; "but you are mistaken about his locality, Mr. Tremenhere; he was at Florence when she last heard from him."

"Indeed! Then," he continued, laughing, "I will sketch him as the peterel of my idea; shall I?"

"He will feel flattered, doubtless, at any notice from your pencil, Mr. Tremenhere," was her cold reply. Her mother was again deep in her book.

"I have an ornithological thought in my brain, hatching, Lady Dora; I purpose sketching all my friends, *à la plume*."

"What will you make me?" she asked, hoping to change the style of their previous conversation.

"You!" and he lowered his tone, and looked fixedly at her. She could not withdraw her gaze, he was sketching her brow—"You!—you shall be the fabled weevil, and I, the sick man, fit to die, turning my face to you to implore for life. Do not turn your head away, and thus bid that sickness be to death; but, extracting my heart's disease, with your sweet breath, fly upwards to heaven, and burn it out by the sun that we may so live together!"

"You must be mad!" she involuntarily cried, turning her eyes hastily to where her mother sat. But *she* had heard nothing; they were at some distance from her, and he spoke so low.

"Yes, perhaps I am; but madmen have happy dreams sometimes, we cannot refuse them these, where their reality is so hopeless and sad. But you have not answered me; may I place you among my ornithological specimens, as the milkwhite weevil of my thoughts?"

"And if not the sick man," she asked, and the voice trembled, though she endeavoured to smile as in jesting, "what will you depict yourself?"

"A goose!" he answered, laughing; "and I will lend your ladyship my quills to write to Florence! Am I not a *bon enfant?*"

This term in French, so completely in keeping with the character of the bird he chose as his representative, provoked a laugh even from Lady Dora, beneath which she covered, at least she fancied she covered, her confusion.

"How very lively you are, Dora!" said her mother approaching. "What has occurred?"

"A most absurd error on my part," he answered. "Only fancy, Lady Ripley: I was to-day forgetting sex, character—all, and (the quiver of arrows misled me) was going to transform Lady Dora into Cupid! Ye gods! who could withstand arrows from such a bow?"

"How could you imagine so absurd a thing, Mr. Tremenhere?" asked the not very imaginative Lady Ripley, not certain whether to feel offended or no.

"I really cannot conceive! Altogether it would have been out of place; for love, they say, flies out of the window when poverty enters at the door. This never could be applicable to Lady Dora," and he bowed in seeming excuse before her. So much did his heart war against her, that, even desirous as he was to gain his point, he could not restrain his tongue from words of bitterness; yet she felt it impossible to think he meant them: she looked upon it as a natural sarcasm of character, which made a gentle word doubly dangerous.

"You are going in a huge body to see a Parisian wonder to English eyes, to-night, I understand, Lady Ripley," he said, turning the conversation.

"Yes, truly; I am curious to see a *Bal Masqué à l'Opera*, never having witnessed one."

"Indeed! shall you go early?"

"I really do not know. I was averse to going, and especially taking Lady Dora; but Lady Lysson has made up her party, and, closely concealed by dominoes, I presume we shall pass unnoticed."

"You accompany us, I believe?" hazarded Lady Dora, addressing him.

"I hope to meet you there," was the reply; "accompany, *that* I shall not be able to accomplish. Lady Lysson spoke of a signal by which her party should know one another; a rose on the left breast, I think?"

"Yes; but it seems unnecessary to me," replied Lady Ripley; "for, of course, we shall none of us separate."

"But in mercy to those forced to come late and rejoin the party, it is done," he answered.

"*A propos*, Mr. Tremenhere!" cried Lady Dora. "I have not yet chosen my domino; until this moment I had forgotten it. Madame —— had promised to have two or three for my choice, completed this afternoon. We will, if you please, leave 'Diane' for to-day," and she rose.

"With regret, then, Lady Dora; but where so grave an occupation calls you, I must submit;" and with a few constrained words they parted. Parting is very awkward, where two persons have been trying their wings together in a flight of love; one or the other is sure to lose some feathers in endeavouring to smooth them down into sober propriety at the last moment. Tremenhere was perfectly calm, and all a mamma like Lady Ripley might wish to see him. Lady Dora blushed—half held out her hand—half withdrew it.

"Permit me to fasten your glove, Lady Dora," he said quietly; "I see it embarrasses you."

She held it towards him, colouring deeply. Scarcely touching the hand, he buttoned it; and, bowing with perfect ease, he led the way to the outer door.

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"Has the workwoman sent in those dominoes?" asked Madame ——, of her forewoman, that afternoon.

"No."

"Then send directly, and say they *must* come in at once; for *cette belle Anglaise Milady* Dora Vaughan,

is coming to select one of them, and *Milady* Lysson, and several others, who are going *en cachette* to a *bal de l'opera*, this evening."

This message was given to the workwoman; and Minnie's pale fingers trembled violently as she finished off the last hood, for she was the workwoman, in her little, sad garret!

CHAPTER XIV.

NEED we describe a *bal de l'opera?*—we mean, in all its varied groups, its mystery, its joyousness! Or only skim over the surface, and speak of the mounting the carpeted stair, with the immense mirrors on the landing, where you are startled at first by the shadow you cast upon it—a gloomy vision pourtraying *tout en noir!* Then the almost silent whispering groups, like muffled demons. Here, a couple *en costume;* there, a man leaning against a pillar, looking frightfully sheepish, and trying to smile and retort.

'Tis an Englishman, *sans masque,* of course, (no gentleman covers his face, unless he has a motive for so doing,) who is dreadfully intrigued by two black dominoes, who are telling him all he has been doing the last fortnight. He has been lured hither by an anonymous letter, asking him to come and meet a blue domino; twice he has furtively looked at this letter, to be certain it said blue, being positive in his own mind that one of these two must be the writer. Shall we leave him in his perplexity, and, standing on the stair leading down into the *salle de danse,* where a dense crowd, in every imaginable dress, is jostled together, endeavouring

to dance, and, looking on, admire the sober, judge-like gravity of several men—authors, artists, men of the highest rank, semi-disguised—who are dancing the most grotesque figures without a smile on their countenances? They look as if they had made a pact, for an allotted time, with some mocking spirit, to make fools of themselves. Or shall we look up in a *loge au premier*, and see a group of many, the ladies all in black dominoes, the gentlemen in plain evening dress, unmasked?

Yes; we will pause here. This is Lady Lysson's box; for see!—every lady has a rose on the left breast. How amused they all appear! Some had been before, others never; and there is something peculiarly exciting and novel to an English lady the first time she sees a *bal de l'opera*: she has heard so much of and against them, it is almost as a forbidden tree, which makes the fruit the sweeter.

Tremenhere came in rather late, and alone. He was standing in the *foyer*, looking around him: this large saloon was crowded to excess. Near the clock (that place for rendezvous) he stood, well assured there he should soon be seen by some of the party; but for some time he looked in vain: they were all in their *loge*, too much delighted with the scene to quit hastily. As he stood thus, some one brushed past him; rather, they were pushed by the crowd. *He* had not previously noticed them, but they had been fixed, statue-like, regarding him; and the crowd pushed them from their contemplative position against him.

"Oh!" ejaculated a trembling voice; "I beg pardon. I——"

He turned: it was a black domino, with the significant rose on its breast. He instantly offered his arm, and the woman clung to it as in terror.

"I see," he said in a low tone, "that I have been fortunate enough to offer my protection to one of the 'Roses of the Left,' but to whom, I am totally ignorant. How have you lost your party? 'Tis unpleasant in so great a crowd; you might be insulted."

"Sir," she uttered in a low, scarcely audible, voice, and in French, "you are mistaken—we are strangers."

"Strangers!" he cried, stopping an instant, and gazing at the closely-concealed face and figure. "Impossible! else you had not taken my arm; for you must be one of Lady L——'s party by your dress."

The girl was silent; but a sigh escaped her.

"You are terrified," he said kindly. "Do not fear; we are safe, and soon shall meet some of our friends. I must indeed be accused of great forgetfulness, when I admit I have no recollection or idea who you can be. May I not know?"

"We are strangers," she uttered again, in a tone scarcely audible, still in French. "I do not understand English."

"Well, as you will," he replied gaily. "I like it thus —'tis in keeping with the place—this mystery. Only pardon me for reminding you, for consistency sake, that your first words were decidedly not in French; and though you cannot *understand English*, you have been replying

to all my questions addressed to you in that tongue. However, as you prefer the other, *changeons*," and he commenced a fluent conversation in Gallic. She had visibly started when he pointed out to her the error of her confused mind. For some time their conversation was merely monosyllabic on her part. "Some silly young English girl Lady Lysson has brought with her," thought he, "who thinks she must sustain a character, and this very stupid attempt at intriguing me is the result. How can she have lost her party?—scarcely prudent in Lady Lysson to leave her so unguarded; she is evidently young. Who can she be?"

In a few minutes more, he was fain to admit that the lady *did* however intrigue him, and considerably; for, by an evident effort over herself, she overcame some cause of trepidation, and, if not easy in manner, was sufficiently ingenuous and pleasing in her remarks to interest him much.

"Where have I heard her voice?" he mentally said. "It is evidently subdued and disguised, and 'tis only when an unguarded tone escapes, that I seem to hear a remembered one; yet 'tis too imperfectly uttered to convey memory to my ear. Certainly she has intrigued me! Were she the veriest Frenchwoman that ever made a vow to miss no one *bal masqué*, and perfect in the amusements and mystifications of all, she could not have more cleverly accomplished her purpose than this girl; for she has called me by name, and I can guess no one she can be!"

"Here is a seat," he said, after a moment's pause in

their conversation; "shall we take advantage of it, or would you prefer going to Lady Lysson's box?"

"Oh, not there!" she whispered shrinkingly.

"Why not there? On my life, lady, you puzzle me much. Come, confide in me: I am addressing some one —some fair, young, unexpected guest, who, having heard of the projected party, has escaped from governesses, etc., to come hither also—am I not right?" This was the only solution he could find for the enigma, engendered by her strange fear at the proposal he made, to go to Lady Lysson's box.

"You are wrong," she uttered. "I have no one to restrain my wishes. I came here to-night for a purpose, but *alone!*"

"Alone!" and he started. "Then why this signal?" and he pointed to the rose.

"I cannot tell you. Is Lady Dora Vaughan here to-night?"

"By heavens, you know them all! Who are you? Pray, tell me; confide in my honour—I have never broken faith in my life!"

A sigh, almost a sob, escaped from her bosom. He turned amazed. Tremenhere was not a vain man, but the strangeness of the whole scene made him ask himself, whether it might not be some love-sick girl's *escapade;* but the question, for which he could find no answer, was, "Who can she be?" Her abrupt mention of Lady Dora's name confirmed this idea.

"Lady Dora is here," he said, "that is, she was to be; but I came alone. I have seen no one but yourself, my

fair incognita, and now let me ask, wherefore were you beneath the clock?"

"Because—because, 'tis a good point for observation; and I was looking for some one."

"Then I have carried you away—shall we seek them?"

"No, I am content; that is, I have changed my mind."

"How did you know the reputation 'the clock' has as a point of observation, as you term it; *we* call it one of *rendezvous*—have you been here often?"

"Heaven forbid! 'tis my *first* visit."

"Indeed! then a powerful motive must have urged you to take so hazardous a step, if in truth, as I believe, you are connected with some one of Lady Lysson's society, and here *en cachette*."

"I have a motive—let it rest; I am satisfied it should do so; but having had it, I was told *sous l'horloge* I should most probably see every one in the saloon better than elsewhere."

"Well, *mon domino*, you are a mystery; in truth, 'tis a scene from the *Domino Noir*. I would I were the happy Horace; I dare not think so."

She was perfectly silent.

"Surely I have no fair *pensionnaire* escaped from her convent, at my side?"

"No, truly—one her own mistress. Is not Lady Dora Vaughan very handsome?"

"Very!" and he started at the sudden transition in her speech. "Don't you know her?"

"Well; but I wished to hear your opinion as an artist—you must be better enabled to judge than I can."

"Now tell me when you saw her last? Give me at least a chance of guessing who you are?"

She paused an instant, then added, "Yesterday, walking with you in the Tuileries, and with several other ladies."

"True! *Pray*, tell me something of yourself; let me see your eyes, your mouth, or hand," and he took the one resting on her knee.

"Not for worlds!" she exclaimed in unmistakable terror, clasping them together.

"Do not be alarmed, I would not use any violence; you are with one incapable of an ungentlemanly act, I trust."

"I know *that*," she said emphatically, "or of one wilfully unkind or cruel, if you allowed your heart to act freely."

"For mercy's sake, what do you mean? I entreat you tell me who you are. I swear to you, your secret shall be safe." A strange, unaccountable tremor crept over him, yet without a suspicion of any thing approaching the truth.

"I cannot, dare not—I would I durst!" and again she sighed.

A thought crossed his mind, and he turned and looked fixedly at her, but not a hair was visible, or of the eye, more than a speck. "No," he said, after the survey, "you are not tall enough; yet this dress so disguises! Tell me, I conjure you, is your name Mary?"

"No, on my honour; but cease guessing—you will not know me to-night—some day you will, perhaps."

At that moment a group of several persons came up. The ladies had roses on their breasts. One of the gentlemen, on whom a tall figure leaned, stood still, but unbending, before Tremenhere, who was attentively watching every turn in his domino's figure, to guess some known style—but all was vain, graceful in every movement, but to him, still a mystery.

"I declare," whispered a lady's voice, "you are the worst cavalier in the world! We have been expecting you in our box this hour, and here you are playing deserter." Miles started; his eye fell on Lord Randolph Gray, on whose arm Lady Dora was leaning. He knew her figure at a glance.

"Lady Lysson," he said, in an under tone to the speaker, "you should not accuse me, for here have I been taking care of one of your strayed lambs, which has singularly intrigued me! I fail to discover my fair friend; pray, present me to her." He had risen to Lady Lysson as she spoke; when he turned round again, the place beside him was vacant! The domino had glided away, like a phantom. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "where is she?"

"That lady beside you when we came up? She rose, and walked hurriedly away when I spoke to you."

"But she is one of your party! She had a rose on her breast!" he cried in amazement.

"Pardon me, this is some error. All my party is safe here," (she looked round on the two behind her, Lady

Dora and Lord Randolph, who were conversing together,) "or up in the box. Your eyes have deceived you."

"Nay, I will not admit that; for though she persisted in speaking French, her accent was English, though evidently disguised, and she knew you all, and inquired about you, by name!"

"Oh!" laughed the lady, "I dare say it was one of our attendants, who, with the true spirit of intrigue, has borrowed our disguise to amuse herself at your expense."

"It was no servant," he emphatically said. And his wonder increased, the more he thought of it.

"Come, leave off puzzling about your incognita. I should have deemed you *trop Français* to be scared by an intrigue *de bal masqué*. Come, Mr. Tremenhere," she lowered her voice, "I have a favour to ask—something to command," she added, smiling. "I made this party to-night, knowing that my nephew would be here, and knowing also, that the laws of these balls forbid serious acts—I mean angry ones——In good honest truth, you must shake hands. He declares, that whatever you may have against him, he is as ever kindly disposed towards you, and whatever your quarrel, of the cause of which I am innocent, let me beg of you, for my friendship sake towards both, to shake hands, forget, and forgive."

"Tremenhere," cried Lord Randolph, coming forward with a hand out, and candour unmistakable on his brow, "I see my aunt is urging you; come, give me your hand, and a grasp in friendship. On my soul you

wronged me, and from my soul I pity you!" He glanced upwards at the black band on Miles's hat. This latter fixed his deep eyes on him, and in that glance he read the other's inmost soul; no, guilt could never wear that look! Lord Randolph he had thought led away by passion to commit an unworthy act, for he knew he was no cold-blooded villain. A still, small voice had been some time whispering to him, that look—the calm, unblenching, feeling expression on the other's face brought a cold, grey light of despair to his heart, like that of early winter's dawn, when, for the first time by day, we look upon a loved face, whose spirit had fled by torch-light.

"I believe you!" he uttered, in a husky voice, grasping his hand. "*Let us forget it.*" There was something so broken-hearted in the tone, that Lord Randolph felt his bosom swell—something choked him; for he was a man, as we have seen, of feeling.

"Better so," he said, in a low tone. "Forget it, Tremenhere—'twas destiny!"

Miles did not reply, but burst into a discordant laugh.

"I have done so," he said; "you see I have! *This*," and he pointed towards his hat, "is only the usage of society. Obligation! form! let us *never* speak of it!" And, wringing his hand, he turned to the ladies, who had discreetly conversed apart; but Lady Dora's eyes never quitted Tremenhere's face. But she did not read him as Lord Randolph did: as their hands parted, this latter mentally said—

"Poor fellow! *There* is a man who *never* will know peace, whatever he may seem to the world. From my soul I pity him!"

Nothing was perceptible in Miles's manner. From that night he grew paler perhaps, but the canker was unseen. He was gayer, wittier, more amusing than ever; but as the door of his studio closed on the world, the man sat down with his conviction and undying remorse. One glance at Lord Randolph had enlightened his darkened mind. There were two feelings which grew apace in his heart from that moment—one was, a restless desire to be ever in the other's presence; he never gave utterance to a word of friendship, never spoke or alluded to Minnie; but, as if it could restore fame to her memory, his every earthly tie was Lord Randolph; and, to the utter amazement of all, an intimacy the most complete sprung up between them—both knew why, but neither ever noticed it. This horror of naming his wife prevented Miles seeking Mary Burns; he felt it would kill or madden him, to speak of her. He would crush her memory before all eyes, by a mask the most complete; only one eye should read his soul—Heaven's!

The other collateral feeling which he alluded to was, hatred towards Lady Dora, the most intense; for he felt the unkindness of her family had left Minnie exposed to all his own ungovernable passions; and she had been the first to place her cousin in an equivocal point of view with Lord Randolph. But these were feelings of after hours: we must return to the ball.

"Thank you," said Lady Lysson, pressing his hand, to thank him for his reconciliation with Lord Randolph. "Now give me your arm." And they passed on.

Persons talk of suffering; but could there be any to surpass Tremenhere's this evening? Obliged to listen to, and join in amusement and gaiety! Among all the masks there, there was not one more complete in disguising, than his face; for no one could have guessed, in the unconcerned laughter which at times crossed it, that it was as sunshine on ice—all cold and frozen beneath.

Lady Dora felt extremely piqued and galled at his manner. She had hoped for a triumph for her pride—vanity, it was not—in seeing him frown in jealous rage upon Lord Randolph; or else favour her with some of those sarcasms which spoke of vitality, even while they wounded. But nothing of the kind occurred. He was courteous in the extreme, witty, gay, and most attentive and polite to herself—nothing more.

Only one person there read his heart, and keenly felt for that man, laughing over the tomb in his heart; for Lord Randolph had seen that conviction had been the inspiration of a moment, born of a glance at his own unshrinking face. Moore, in speaking of a heart, said, "Grief brought all its music forth." So it was with Lord Randolph. The shock he received on hearing of Minnie's death, called to vigour and beauty all the dormant qualities of a really sterling heart; and made him capable of feeling deeply for the man, whose hopeless woe was as an open page before him.

In the course of their rambles through that crowd, Lady Dora found herself on Tremenhere's arm, whose eye was searching every where for his mysterious domino. In spite of himself, she pre-occupied his mind; but amidst the dozens there, he failed to see any one at all resembling her, either in dress or that nameless grace perceptible in every undulation, of her unrelieved disguise.

"You are pre-occupied, Mr. Tremenhere," she said, after half a dozen absent replies had escaped his lips.

"Pardon me; I am boyish enough to be amused at this scene."

"One would not think it, for I never beheld a more seeking, anxious countenance—possibly you would prefer solitude."

"Solitude, and here? Lady Dora."

"Yes—Byron's."

"Oh! 'with some sweet spirit for my minister?' Nay, if that were the case, where find a fairer than the one who for awhile blesses me?" and he almost pressed her arm; and, aroused by her questioning, became Tremenhere as the world had made him.

"I certainly am pre-occupied," he said at last, "by that black domino, with whom you found me so very quietly tête-à-tête. The rose is emblematical in this case—a wild mystery."

"Oh! Lady Lysson, I make no doubt, was correct. Some one of our maids has made an *escapade;* and, proving the rose's privilege, has intrigued you."

"Assuredly, she was no servant; but her sudden dis-

appearance when you came puzzles me. Let us talk of something else; it would be madness in me to waste these moments on another, when I have so few accorded me in your society. Lady Dora, tell me, does this amuse you, much?"

"Yes, 'tis something so original to me, unconceived before, the hundreds congregated. I ask whence do they come, whither will they go?"

"Probably, most of them to supper at some celebrated restaurant," he said laughing, and changing the vein of her moralizing; "and some to regret, some to rejoice. What will your feeling be?"

"It must be rejoicing, for the regret has been seized upon. Did you hear that deep sigh near us?"

He turned; they were leaning near a *loge* door, and almost beside them stood a domino in brown, with blue ribbons. He glanced at the figure.

"Some *pauvre delaissée*," he said laughing; then turning towards the girl, cried, "do not sigh, *il reviendra*."

"*Jamais*," was the low reply, and the figure moved aside.

"Never mind her," he continued, turning towards Lady Dora; "but tell me, how will you rejoice, and why?"

"I am rejoicing, am I not?—I feel much amused."

'Twas true; the influence of the place was creeping over her cold nature. She was not the Lady Dora of any day yet in which he had seen her.

In the course of their rambles th ad. Lady Dora found herself on Trem ; eye was searching every where fr m— no. In spite of himself, she pr amidst the dozens there, he d one. resembling her, either in perceptible in every und almost, guise.

"You are pre-occr am not so pre- after half a dozen ? olph."

"Pardon me; stily and unthinkingly ; this scene." lse of mine beat quicker or

"One wor seeking, an worse than hate. I would rather fer solitu ment I inspire you with, than his."

"So' speak in enigmas, Mr. Tremenhere."

"Y would rather be hated than looked upon with in- " ference. We seek to crush a snake, but we step if er a worm!"

"A man may be neither."

"What, then? A caged bird, to serve a woman's caprice; or a chained monkey, to amuse her?"

"Nay; you are looking on the species in degradation. Why not a creature free to come or go—thought of in absence—loved in presence—going, to return more gladly—sure of a kindly welcome?"

He looked fixedly at her. Could this be Lady Dora? An idea crossed his mind—she was one of two things, either luring him on to enchain, then crush him beneath the weight of those manacles; or else the arrival of Lord

necessity of deciding her fate, the scene
lation from all, and freedom from re-
ed to make her cast off the wearying
osed pride, which had cloaked her
steel: it was a battle between
re on their guard.
lvance," he thought, "and
herself in my hands. I will
e was merciless and cold-hearted.
aloud, in answer to her last sentence.
an eagle, free and soaring, mated with one
ambitious as myself—towering and untameable.
n a one I could choose—to such a one yield love for love, and, like the fabled bird, consume with the ardour of my affections, and rise again from my ashes to live again—love again!" His warmth aroused her to a sense of her danger.

"We are in truth playing our parts in the madness around us!" she said, in a voice which struggled to be calm.

"True; but we play our parts *con amore*, admit that; and the better, that we know two things—one is, *you cannot* love—the other, *I* dare not."

"I should have thought you a man to dare all things!"

"You give me credit for more than I deserve. There are many things I would not encounter willingly—one is——"

"What?"

Despite his self-command, a cloud crossed his brow.

"I will tell you some day," he hastily answered; "but if I met this spectre, *even* as spectre, I would fly it."

"I would fly nothing; *there* is the difference between us."

"What if your wayward heart—for all hearts are so—fixed itself upon some unworthy object, would you not fly them?"

"No; were I to do so, I should never conquer; it would pursue me ever—flight would be vain. I would live near it, seek it, familiarize myself with it, till the inconstant heart grew tired of its bauble, then I——" she paused.

"Would dash it to earth, and trample on it, reckless of its fragile nature. Believe me, vases of potter's clay are as fragile as the finest Sèvres ever produced by fire."

"Perhaps so; but such should rest satisfied with draughts from water spring, nor seek to hold the ruby wine which a monarch sips; only degradation could ensue."

She was not actually thinking of him when she said this: it was only the overflowing of her cup of pride, which coloured her speech; but he remembered every word, and it strengthened his determination, if possible, to humble this spirit to the dust.

"What is it 'Ruy Blas' says so admirably, '*un ver de terre, amoureux d'une étoile,*' the star shines on it, though it cannot abase itself, and sends its light to guide the poor worm of the earth to its home in a dark sod, where it may pine and die, rejected, despised, unloved, because

it has been created only for that fate of grovelling insignificance!"

Neither heard the almost sob behind them; he was turned towards Lady Dora, and in the crowd stood the "Brown Domino," who had crept back unnoticed, to hear these last words.

"I have been a sceptic in love," she almost whispered.

"*Have* been; are you not now? I should fancy so." She was perfectly silent.

"If you have *present* faith, on what is it grounded?"

"Perhaps on the dream of an hour!" she ejaculated, scarcely above her breath.

"Then watch its waking, and if it survive the glare of day, cherish it; if not in all freshness, banish it—'tis a temptation, not a rock to build upon. May I call to-morrow, and see if it be in existence? or passed, leaving no sweet savour behind of truth and futurity of joy? Here is Lady Lysson seeking you—may I call to-morrow?"

"Yes, but—but, come in forgetfulness of this night. I surely am spellbound. This is a part of some witchcraft in this giddy scene. Remember, and forget this—and—me—other than this, were vain madness!"

"I will only remember what I read then in your eyes; let *them* answer me—*not* your lip; words are false, tears are recorded untruths, the eyes are scholars of the soul. They shall learn all its truth, and impart it to me in a glance. I will call to-morrow. And to-morrow," thought he, "I shall start for Marseilles; I *must* go there and know all!"

"I thought we should find you in this corridor!" exclaimed Lord Randolph, without an idea of jealous fear. "Hollo! what is this bustle about? Oh! only a lady has fainted. I don't wonder—'tis deucedly warm!"

Some gentlemen were carrying a lady in a brown domino towards a private box. She was apparently lifeless in their arms. Unheeding, the party turned away laughing, and mounted the staircase to seek their box, and the remainder of their friends.

CHAPTER XV.

It would be a task of pain and sorrow to tell all the bitterness of a woman's life, thrown friendless, delicate, and poor, in any land, but especially a stranger one, for one who had been nurtured so gently. Surely—surely, the wind is ever tempered to the shorn lamb!

As the cares of life increased, so grew Minnie's energy; even when a dry crust alone broke her fast of the long, toiling day, her spirits upheld her. "If I have lost *him*," she mentally said, "it has been for some wise purpose; even though my stubborn heart rebels, still I am not comfortless; have I not my boy?—all my own!—no one to tear his love from me—no one to prejudice him against me: so Heaven preserve him to me, I may yet be content, if not happy!" and the young mother knelt beside him, and prayed fervently for strength to bear all! Poor Minnie knew herself so innocent, she could pray in hope.

There are, unhappily, those who scoff at religion, and call it cant. None are so cheerful and hopeful as those who place their reliance on it, in all afflictions; for they know 'tis a flower which will never fade, and 'tis in our sorrows we so truly discover all its worth, and weep for those who are in ignorance of its powers. Religion

is indeed like an Arabian tree, shedding its odorous gums on those who lean against it for support!

Minnie found it so, and she discovered, too, that even in her wretchedness there were others more so. Her room was a poor garret, an *cinquième*, for as yet she had little work, there are so many seeking life through the same channel—she had no friends—then, too, her child was a burthen to her efforts; she could not at all times leave him, and little Miles was now nearly five months old. Sometimes the *concièrge* of the house, who was better than most of that most mercenary class, would take her child for her, while she sought work. There was ever a fear over her, in going out, lest she should meet Tremenhere. What her hopes were respecting him, who might say? Did she know them herself? or were they those inseparable clingings of the heart, which, like a limpet on a rock, adheres, inseparable from it, however rough the dashing waves? She had hope, else life would have fled. She still resided near Tremenhere's friend, Duplin, whither he often came, and thus, from her high window, she could see his tall figure pass. Ever closely, doubly veiled, and muffled up, she had watched, and met him in the dusk—she had followed too, by day, and seen him, too frequently for her peace of mind, accompany Lady Dora in walks and rides. True others were there; but he was ever by *her* side, and she began to question how it might terminate. Of such an event as marriage she had not dreamed, when, allowing all to believe her death, she had become so chilled at heart from the belief of the indifference of

all, even poor sorrowing Dorcas, that she had no courage to make a friend there in confidence. "No," she said, in her disheartenment, "not to any of them will I betray my existence; they deserted me living, let them believe me dead!" and a morbid satisfaction at the thought crept over her. But when so fearful a consequence as his marriage with another broke in upon her mind, she became feverish, restless, and incapable of guiding herself aright. Before, however, this terror came to add to her sufferings, she used to toil cheerfully—her boy, lying perhaps on a pillow at her feet, crowing and laughing in her gentle face. Then he was so like his father—the same large brown eyes, and shading lashes, which tempered so much their fire—it was all Miles's face, but with her own light hair, in glossy curls, with a rich, sunny glow on the cheek; and with all the love she lavished on him, the little voice was seldom raised in tears, only laughter—laughter, which convulsed the bright face, as he hung, shrieking with it, round the fair mother's neck. We have said that, even in her wretchedness, Minnie had learned that there were others more so, in outward seeming. In the garret adjoining her own, she frequently heard, as the hours of the night crept on, and she was sitting up completing some work, a quiet, heavy step plodding up and down the room, in evident thought or pain. Often had she listened to this sad neighbour; and his sorrows and loneliness seemed to add to her own. A laugh beside her might have cheered; but this lonely watching wore

on her already chastened heart. She asked the *concièrge* one day if she knew who it was.

"A poor old Frenchman," she replied; "very poor, I think, and all alone—but he seems proud in his necessity. And then, madame, you know I cannot do much for any one—I am not rich; and he never gives me an opportunity of speaking. He pays regularly; but I think, poor old man, that his means of existence are very small."

This decided kind-hearted Minnie. "We are never so poor," she said to herself, "but what we can assist one another, even if only by a kind word to lighten life's weary load. I will try and speak to this poor man."

Where a woman resolves upon doing a good action, she generally succeeds in some way. There was something about her, in her voice and manner, which at once inspired confidence and affection in the worthy; and when this pretty, delicate creature, with her little boy in her arms, tapped gently one evening at the next door, and asked for a light, if he had one, of the thin tenant, who was almost bent double by age, and still more, sorrow and poverty, the man's cold face brightened as he answered, while the poor lips trembled with cold, and possibly hunger, "My child, I have none; I am going—going out."

Alas, poor creature! he was going out in the bitterer cold, thinly clad, to endeavour to circulate the nearly frozen blood, before returning to creep into a half-covered bed, and there strive to practise the French proverb of "*qui dort dîne*," for he was dinnerless. There

was something in the accent not strictly Gallic, though he spoke French.

"Don't go out to-night, *mon voisin*," she said smiling; "it is wet and cold; you are alone, so am I save for *mon enfant*. Do you like children?"

"Yes," and he laid his thin hand on little Miles's head; "I love them well; I once had two of my own," and he stifled a sigh.

"Well, then, you shall come in, and do me a neighbourly kindness; I am a poor *ouvrière*, and must work hard to-night—come in, I am going to make a fire; you shall nurse my boy whilst I work—will you oblige me?"

"Willingly," he answered, "if I can serve you."

"That you greatly can. Stay in your room till I have made mine comfortable, and then I will call you, I am so much obliged to you, it will help me greatly, for a child is an *embarras* sometimes, and I like working and talking—'tis very kind of you."

She had a talent for making the obliged seem her creditors, and thus placing them at perfect ease. So hurrying back to her room, Miles was laid on his accustomed place, a pillow on the floor; lest he should fall off, she seldom placed him on her bed. And then an Asmodeus might have seen Minnie—the fair and gentle—the one on whom the winds of heaven were once almost chidden, if they blew coldly—on her knees, lighting the stove in her room, for she soon found a match; the search for one was an excuse, and her face looked glad—that lip forgot its sadness—she was doing angels' work—charity. In an incredibly short space of time the room looked

cheerful—the door of the stove was left open—the wood crackled in it—the glare lighted the humble garret. She drew the old, but clean curtain before the window—lit her lamp—placed her second chair (she had but two) and then she summoned her shivering guest.

"Stay," she cried, as he seated himself, springing up herself; "I have forgotten my *bouillotte;*" (we cannot call it kettle—it had no resemblance to such a thing; neither can we translate the word, to give any idea of that queer, tin sort of jug, which rattles as if it had marbles in its head, and which is pushed into hot ashes to boil.) "I have forgotten my *bouillotte,*" cried she; "and what should I do without a cup of tea? Do you like tea, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame," he answered, faintly smiling; "but I have not taken any some time."

"Then we will have a cup together. Are you not English?" she asked, pausing in her arrangement of the *bouillotte* in the stove; and as she knelt on one knee to do so, she rested the tips of her white fingers (even still) on the floor, to support herself, and looked up in his face like a child. She looked like a picture thus; for the pale face was glowing with pleasure at her good deed, and the close neat little *grisette* cap concealing all that fair hair, except the braids on her forehead; she looked so innocent and pure, the old man bent his eyes upon that upturned face, and like a father, placing a hand on her shoulder, said in perfect English, though with a slightly foreign accent—

"I have lived much among English, and been in

England; but that is long ago. I am a Swiss by birth."

"Oh!" she burst forth in English, "I am so happy to meet some one who speaks my own tongue, it has been a stranger to me so long a time; let us converse always in it: the sound has been lost to me. I have been teaching my child to speak his first word in my native tongue."

"What is your boy's name?" he asked, deeply interested in this fair young mother.

She hesitated a moment. In christening him he had been named "William," as second name, after her father, and by this she generally now called him to strangers; his father's might lead somehow to detection, for frequently the *concièrge* took him in her arms for a walk, when she was too busy to leave home, and always returned with an account of the many persons who stopped to inquire the boy's name. As William, or Guillaume Deval, who might recognize the parents? Almost an impulse induced her to give him Miles's name when this other inquired; but, checking herself, she said "William."

"Has he no father?" asked the old man, caressing the boy, who now sat on his mother's knee; and he looked searchingly at her. But any thought of error fled when you gazed in Minnie's pure face: sin never could look thus.

"We are parted," she said sadly. "Some day, perhaps, monsieur, I may tell you all, and ask your advice; for indeed you seem as an old friend, and father to me. I hope we shall often meet."

And they did; and it seemed as if a blessing followed her good deed, for work came pouring in, and she found constant employment, as we have seen, even from the first dressmakers in Paris—thus she knew of Lady Lysson's party to the *bal de l'opera*; and her fingers made the domino in which Lady Dora leaned on Tremenhere and listened to his love—so strange a thing is fate! An impulse, impossible to resist, impelled her to visit that scene, whose gaiety harmonized so little with her feelings. She had the two dominoes to make; and in the black one we have seen how much she intrigued Tremenhere—the other she had left with the woman keeping the cloaks, and her foresight served her purpose well, of knowing all. Who may tell the agony of this woman, leaning once again on his arm, and listening to those accents which thrilled her inmost soul—words too of interest fell from his lips, and her bursting heart said, "Throw off your mask, and he will fly you in horror or hate;" but nothing could ever equal in agony that moment when, leaning against the pillar in her second dress, she heard the greater portion of his conversation with Lady Dora; and, worse than all, the promise of the morrow! How could she dive into his heart, and read its sorrow, remorse, and revenge, prompting it to the part he was playing with her cousin? She only saw facts—heard words. She saw him friendly and kind with Lord Randolph; and in his face, whose every look she knew full well, she read confidence and friendship towards that man; then all the hate was her own—it was not mere jealousy, but personal dislike, or he could

not so soon have forgotten her! No wonder then she fainted; and, when recovered from her swoon, she declined—nay, peremptorily refused all assistance to take her home—that toiling home, now made doubly painful; she returned to it nearly mad. The *concièrge*, who had taken charge of her boy, was terrified at the paleness of that still face. Minnie said she had a motive for wishing much to go; and the good-natured woman, thinking it so natural, at once consented to keep the boy with her.

"*Pauvre pétite*," said the woman to herself, as she gave the almost silent Minnie her key and lamp. "She has seen her monsieur, I dare say. Ah! I always thought she was not married—but forsaken, and with her child, too! *pauvre pétite!* I will bring up Guillaume," she said aloud. "*Tenez!* you can scarcely support your own weight, much less his! I'll bring him up to you."

And Minnie thanked her in a whisper, and crept almost lifeless up the stairs.

As yet she had confided nothing of her history to her old neighbour, whom she only knew as a poor man named Georges, who had lost place and fortune. By persuading him that he was useful to her, she had succeeded in making him more frequently her guest, than his own solitary companion. She feared speaking of the past; yet, so much did she love the venerable old man, that she longed to dare confide all, and ask his advice. Now she felt her total inability to act for herself, and resolved to tell him not later than the following day. But there is a destiny ever above ruling, far superior to our puny wills. Next day she was too ill to speak, or see him;

she was confined to her bed, where the intense anguish of her mind drove madness through her frame; and the following one she was delirious, and her shrieking voice could only utter one name—"Tremenhere!" It was no moment for false delicacy. The old man, whom she had befriended, stood by her in her need, and the trembling hands wiped the cold moisture from her brow, or held the cup of *tizane* to her lips. Little Miles was nursed below; and though her eye wandered, seeking something in her madness, she uttered but the one name, sometimes in accents of prayer, sometimes in shrieking horror, for the promised morrow, was with her, even in her delirium!

CHAPTER XVI.

On that morrow, which she so much dreaded, Tremenhere was away from Paris, and hurrying onward towards Marseilles. Once arrived there, his task was an easy one; there were tongues enough to speak to him of the toiling little *ouvrière*, so frail, so persevering, and of the child which came to solace her hours; even her beauty had not unstrung one malevolent tongue against her fame—all was toil, gentleness, and worth. As he drank down each bitter draught, his soul grew sterner —there was not a tear in it to quench the fire of remorse. All, too, had one tale to tell: she always said, when she had saved enough to pay her journey, she should follow her husband, who was an artist at Florence. To fill up the measure of all, he waited upon the lady, whose daughter, Minnie had accompanied on board the fated "Hirondelle." He presented himself as a relative of her husband; he durst not trust his feelings to say, "I am the man," lest all should shrink from him in horror. He spoke of an unhappy quarrel, their separation, and consequent ignorance of where she was. Here he heard of her with tears from the childless mother, of the affection her daughter bore Minnie, whom she had employed

as a workwoman at first, but won by her gentleness, piety, and goodness, had besought her to accompany her to Malta, as nurse to her child—of Minnie's love and devotion for her little "Miles," for thus she had called him there—her firm refusal to wean him, for any sum, from her breast, and her eventually consenting to go to Malta, on their promise to send her, in six months, to Florence—the one dream of her loving wife's heart! 'Tis wonderful Miles could command his feelings enough to listen calmly to all this; but there is a calm far beyond that of perfect peace—'tis that of despair. His face changed not—'twas as though it had been chiseled in marble, by some cunning artificer, to imitate life, for none was there—not a muscle moved—not a shade crossed it; it was the tombstone of hope, whose ashes lay beneath. One thing he did: he sought the room where she had resided in her sorrow—the room where her child's first accents struck upon her ear; it had not been let since, so he sat down alone there for hours, and his wandering eyes looked on every spot on that dingy wall; nothing he left unregarded where her eyes had dwelt, and he saw, as in a vision, all the many thoughts she had left behind her to people the place. He rejoiced no one had ever inhabited the same room since. Seeking the landlord, he rented it for a year, and, paying in advance, carefully locked, and put his seal on it, lest any one should desecrate it.

"No voice in joy shall ever fill that place where she has wept so many silent tears—there, where she loved me still, our spirits have met again. Minnie, for-

give me!" And the man knelt in that desolate abode, and prayed fervently. "If," he said, "I should ever be tempted to forget her sorrow, I will return hither, and fill my heart with memory, and hatred of myself!"

And in this mood he returned to Paris: and a week had elapsed since the ball. It will not seem strange if, on his arrival, he shut himself up in his studio, away from the world, for days. How commune with that?—or those who had known her, and now smiled over her grave?

Every moment his feelings became more vindictive towards Lady Dora: it was the only passion surviving in his heart—all the others were wrecked, and had gone down with the "Hirondelle."

Perhaps it was well that Marmaduke Burton had gone, no one knew whither, or a worse one than vindictiveness might have revived. Assuredly he might have been driven to murder, had he once given way to his prompting fiend.

It will seem almost strange to many, perhaps, that with this anguish raging in his heart, he never once thought even of suicide. Tremenhere was a brave man—an essentially courageous one; he feared nothing in this world. But he had a strong religious sense, implanted by his mother: he feared the suicide's unfailing hell, when madness comes not to plead for the act before Heaven. He was preparing himself, in the solitude of his chamber, for a pilgrimage of suffering and repentance, before he should meet her spirit, doomed in its other state to throw off the garb of mercy and for-

giveness *she* would ever have worn, and before Heaven accuse, perhaps condemn, him. He was preparing to face the world, and veil his suffering—to toil on; and then he asked himself, "For what?" Here his mother arose before him.

"Yes," he said, "I have deserted, forgotten, reviled her; it shall be my task to place her high in brightness and purity. And if, in my passage, one lip breathes Minnie's name in shadow before me, then will I bare all my own heavy sorrow, and, condemning myself, clear her! Now, it would but sully a fame like hers, to drag her forth uncalled for. I must watch my opportunity; and the day I debase *her* enemies—her enemy, her heartless cousin—I will elevate her where none shall dare attaint her again!"

He heard Lord Randolph had called; and here it was that his heart turned towards that man. He remembered the kindly, though unadvisedly done, act at Uplands; this man's kindness of manner; his respectfulness towards her. Now the veil of darkness had fallen, he saw all aright; and a love—a love almost of womanly weakness—arose in his heart towards him. He was the first person whom he received; and when the other started at his pale cheek, he simply answered, he had been ill; a sudden obligation to visit the country, where illness had seized upon him. He started, however, when Lord Randolph begged his congratulations on his approaching marriage with Lady Dora, who had accepted him the previous day. However, his start was not perceptible to his friend, and he spoke all

the speeches of usage as warmly as such are generally spoken; and, taking his arm, they proceeded together to the Hotel Mirabeau.

Lady Dora and her mother sat alone when they entered. The former, despite her general self-possession, coloured painfully, and then became of marble whiteness, while the pale, curling lip alone spoke her internal battle to seem calm.

"I bring you an invalid friend," said Lord Randolph; "Tremenhere has been very ill."

She looked fixedly at him; his eyes were hollow, his cheeks white; but even these were not sufficient excuse, to that despotic heart. "He should have kept his appointment," she mentally said, "any way."

"Have you been at home?" asked Lady Ripley; "for Lord Randolph told us you were not there when he called."

A sudden thought seized Tremenhere; he would make this illness subservient to his plans. "I was forced to leave Paris—circumstances obliged me," he said, and for an instant his eye lighted on Lady Dora; "and something of a slow, nervous fever has overwhelmed me ever since."

"Egad, yes!" cried Lord Randolph; "I found him seated listlessly at his easel, attempting to paint; and when I entered *sans ceremonie*, the fellow mistook me for a rival artist, and hastily threw a covering over some *chef d'œuvre* he was completing."

A faint colour crossed Miles's pale cheek, and unthinkingly his eye fell on Lady Dora, and theirs met in

an instant; he read her thoughts, and saw where it might be made available to his purpose.

"I was painting from memory," he said—so he had been, but *not* Lady Dora, as she imagined. His look, his illness, all combined to make her believe herself the cause, or rather jealousy at Lord Randolph's return; and the exulting heart of the woman bounded with gratified pride; there was not one thought of sincere affection in it. Still she could not quite forgive his departure without seeking her. When a woman feels she has stepped rather too far, and in haste, and passes a sleepless night, collecting herself to undo the evil by apparent indifference, it is most provoking to find all thrown away, and that uttered words which we fancied were sunk deep into another's soul, generating loving thoughts and hopes, had passed over the surface like a meteor across the sky, leaving not the slightest trace of its passage.

"May I be permitted," he said, after a pause, in rather a low tone, for Lord Randolph was warmly discussing some political point with his mother-in-law elect, "to offer my congratulations on your approaching happiness? May you be so—I sincerely desire it."

"Thank you," she answered trembling, and biting her lip at his coolness.

"You appear to have held the happiness of more than his in your keeping—your own I mean, in suspense; and now, the battle over, the sun of joy bursts over all. Lord Randolph is perfectly happy, and I never saw your ladyship looking so well!"

"Then, taking you at your own judgment," she answered hastily, without thinking, and acrimoniously, "you are an exception to the general happiness, for you certainly do not look well; you should have placed——" She paused suddenly, and coloured, remembering what her words implied.

"You are right, Lady Dora. I ought to have placed my happiness in your keeping; would you have well guarded it?"

"I do not understand you, Mr. Tremenhere; and I fear you mistake my meaning," was the haughty reply.

"I fear I have mistaken much; forgive me, the error will have no mate—like myself, it will be lone—forgive me."

There was so much sadness in his voice, that her hand trembled with the emotion her pride even could not quell; she had accepted Lord Randolph in pique at Tremenhere's supposed trifling with her, and now those chains were already galling her; yet, how throw them off? how find courage to cast herself away on him—the man she had once so much despised? It was a fearful war within her. At this juncture Lord Randolph came to their aid in words, but every one was significant to their thoughts.

"Tremenhere!" he cried, "I appeal to you," and he turned to where the two sat, a little apart; she was knitting a purse. "Do you think a *bal masqué*, as we went the other night, a place where no man should take his wife?"

"That depends much on the lady," was the reply.

"I said," answered Lady Ripley, "that in my opinion, from the description given me by Lady Lysson (for I thank goodness I was not there,) that scenes so totally at variance with decorum as men in female attire, and *vice versâ*, and the heterogeneous mass of persons collected there — their freedom of speech, want of all ceremony and obedience to the commonest rules of society, must leave an unfavourable trace on the mind— I declare, even Dora savours of it; for ever since she went there has been a restlessness of spirit, an unquietness of manner, I never noticed before. I should scarcely have wondered at any absurdity she might have committed."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed that lady, in painful confusion.

"On my life," laughed Lord Randolph, "Lady Ripley, you are epigrammatic in your speech. Has Lady Dora been guilty of any absurdity since?"

"You mistake me," hastily answered she, remembering the engagement contracted within a few days; "of any serious fault I trust *my* daughter will never be guilty; but I mean, were she not perfect, as I may, I believe, call her, in strict propriety of thought and action, I should indeed dread what such influence might effect."

"Lady Dora could never forget what is due to her rank and station," said Tremenhere. "There may be a certain excitement in the scene, especially to a person visiting it for the first time; but we will leave all casu-

alties of this kind to your unsophisticated girl, believing in such an absurdity as love different to what the world has viewed it, and thrown with one she fancied destined to call into being that feeling, there is really no saying whether such a one might not be led away by the atmosphere around her to give love for love, and speak her heart freely where the generous mask concealed her blushes from the eye envious to behold that record of her sincerity; but you will all perceive, I am depicting an imaginary scene, and persons. We are all too sage and old in fashion's ways to commit the like follies."

"Oh, of course!" answered the unseeing mother; but every word had echoed in Lady Dora's heart, or its facsimile; for the thing itself she did not possess—it had long been choked by pride.

"I believe," continued Lord Randolph, "that the masques in olden times—at court and elsewhere—were made the medium of intrigues, state and others; but surely nothing could be more innocent than the one the other night!" Lord Randolph was rather primitive in his ideas as regards a *bal masqué a l'opera*, even in our days—Lady Dora did not internally agree with him, but she said nothing.

"Have you secured one box for the *Français* this evening?" asked Lady Ripley, changing the subject. "I quite forgot it," answered Lord Randolph; "come along, Tremenhere, we will go and look for it, and you shall bring it back to the ladies, for I am unavoidably engaged till dinner; of course, you will be of the party?"

"I fear not," he answered; "I have much occupation on hand."

"Nonsense, man! you shut yourself up with your mysterious portrait, till you become perfectly gloomy; it must have a deep interest for you."

"You mistake; 'tis an altar-piece which I am completing to order—a Madonna and child."

"Then, why cover it up so mysteriously?"

"We artists are jealous of our unfinished works being criticised; 'tis, however, not *that* which would detain me to-night, but another claim."

"Pray, set it aside, and accompany us, Mr. Tremenhere," said Lady Ripley, graciously; "Lord Randolph's evident friendship for him, stamped him above what he was before, in her eyes—he still hesitated, when Lady Dora looked up, as if glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece, and almost imperceptibly, 'twas so quickly done, her glance crossed his.

"Then I will do as you *command*," he said, bowing to Lady Ripley; but her daughter felt his eye was upon her, and the *command*, accentuated for her ear alone.

"We can perhaps spare you the trouble of going to the theatre, if you are engaged," cried Lady Ripley. "Dora, we may as well drive there ourselves."

"I shall not leave home to-day, mamma," was the reply.

"But you know, my dear, I *must* call upon the Montagus at four."

"Lady Lysson will willingly accompany you; I know she too purposes a visit to them."

"But your resolution is sudden, Dora; to-day you promised to go with me at four."

"My head aches," she answered coldly; "pray excuse me."

"Oh! if that be the case," replied her ladyship, "I can urge no more; you had better lie down, my dear child, and prepare yourself for the evening's fatigue."

"No, thank you, mamma; with your permission I shall remain here—I have a letter to write."

She never once looked up, but a man the least vain might have fancied, as Tremenhere did, that "the morrow" of the *bal masqué*, was presented to his view, especially after what Lord Randolph had said about his returning with the ticket for the theatre. Making their adieux, the gentlemen left with the understanding that one or both should return, after calling at the *Français* to secure the box.

For a moment Tremenhere hesitated how to act. He asked himself whether his conduct was right towards his friend—the title he gave him in his heart decided him. "She is unworthy of him," he said; "'tis an act of kindness to break off this marriage."

And, consequently at four, he called with the ticket. Lady Dora had been schooling her heart, and received him with perfect composure, much regretting all the trouble he had taken; and she sat with an unfinished letter before her, and the pen between her fingers, as though expecting him to take leave. He read her as an open leaf in a book; and the want of all candour in her disposition made him more than ever resolved to bend her. Every day she had become more warped since he had first seen her; even when he and Minnie had been re-

siding at Chiswick, she could be capable of a generous action; now, not one—she was the world's child!

"Is letter-writing advisable for a headache?" he asked, after the first salutations were over.

"Possibly not," was the cold reply; "but it is one of neglected duty, and I was resolved to finish it to-day."

"Then I will take my leave; a visiter is never more unfortunate than when he cuts the thread of some pleasant narrative by pen or lip," and he was going towards the door. "I have forgotten half my message!" he cried, returning. "Lord Randolph desired me to say, that he had taken upon himself the pleasant task of choosing your ladyship's bouquet for this evening, which will arrive in due season," and he moved towards the door.

"If you see him, Mr. Tremenhere," she said hastily, at the same time throwing down her pen and closing her letter-book, "pray prevent his lordship from giving himself so much trouble; I dislike bouquets in the hand."

"Indeed! permit me to wonder, flowers are kindred to the beautiful—you should not be so unnatural, as to disclaim your own."

"I presume I am expected to bow; but I seldom—*never* do, to compliments; they are so vapid, made up, like these said bouquets, to suit every occasion, every taste, and thus doled out alike to all. Could we listen to half a dozen conversations at once, on the average they would be nearly word for word alike, between an idle man, and a silly woman."

"Why silly?" he asked smiling, still standing, hat in hand, near the door.

"Because all must be, to listen to them," and she pushed away her chair, and rising, dropped down amid the cushions of the ottomans. Without another word, he crossed the room, laid his hat on the table, and, drawing off the one glove remaining on his hand, flung the two into his hat; and then, quietly seating himself beside her, asked with gentle interest,—

"How is your headache—is it better? You look pale!" and he took her hand. For an instant it struggled, then lay still. This was her first false step of bad generalship. His action was so natural, considering their relationship, though only by marriage, that what else had been freedom passed as a right; her struggle to release it denoted a thought of wrong, and he was not slow to take advantage of it.

"Do not deny me even the privilege of a friend—I once possessed that, Lady Dora."

She made no reply.

"You have not answered my question. Is your headache better, or gone? You would do well to banish that, like all other hurtful things."

"*Hurtful* things?" she uttered in echo. "You are right."

"About what? Do we understand one another at last?"

"Tell me," she cried hurriedly, looking up, "whilst we are alone and uninterrupted, where have you been, Mr. Tremenhere?"

She looked, but could not read the anguish which crossed his brow; he made an effort, and subdued it before her.

"Been? shall I tell you truly?"

"Do, and quickly. I would know all *now* at once."

"I fled, to prove many things—I fled, to live with a memory—I fled, to come back a slave!"

His tone was full of soul, for every word was truth; but she applied it wrongly to herself. He had withdrawn his hand, and passed it over his brow. As it fell listlessly on his knee, she laid hers upon it, and it trembled; it was the action of a moment, and as quickly withdrawn.

"What have you proved?" she asked, almost imploringly.

"That we must never trust our own false hearts—they lead us on to destruction; still less, any *living* woman." His thoughts were with the dead, as he deemed.

"Do not look so pale—so afflicted: look as you did on that night."

"*That night*, which never knew a morrow! and yet it held the promise of one, Lady Dora."

"Who cast that promise from his memory, as worthless?"

"Not that, as dangerous, incapable of leading to happiness, as a snare—any thing you will, but a promise of that joy, which another has obtained."

"I will not misunderstand you. There is one thing we may give in pique, the hand, but the heart defies our power—'tis our master."

"Is yours?"

"Yes; I have in vain struggled with it—it daunts me."

"Mine is a slave," he answered, "chained, but not by me; and yours will become so too, and follow the manacled hand, and thus you will be calm and happy."

"I? never. Do you know—do you not see, that my position terrifies me? I have none to counsel—be my guide, and as an error led me to the steps I have taken, direct me how to escape its penalty."

"You mean your marriage with Lord Randolph?" he took her hand as he spoke, and, looking upon it, thought of the day he first held Minnie's thus!

"'Tis a fair hand," he said, regarding it. "Oh! pity this should break hearts, sever ties of love—this little tiny thing, which holds so much fearful power. Are you sure you do not love Lord Randolph?"

"Sure? I almost hate him, and should, were he my husband."

"Are you mad? You must have been to pledge yourself to him, such as you are—one to be loved, worshipped, adored, if with this hand you gave your heart."

"Thus I would have it—and only thus!" she uttered, her pride subdued in her feelings. He had urged her on by his manner; she had prepared herself against his prayers, but not against his ambiguous manner; for he looked as one fearful of speaking—of one on his guard. She fancied he durst not, and she dared all to prove him at last. For an instant he thought, "Shall I doom her to misery, such as she has not dreamed of, and, mar-

rying her, tell her why I wooed her?" but a thought, even yet of pity, came over him; he knew the worse than death he could condemn her to, by making her his unloved, despised wife; then, too, Minnie stood between them, and forbade it. He felt he *never* could place another, even in hate, or revenge, where her head alone, though but in memory might lie—on his heart.

"Can you love? Do you love?" he asked, in a low whisper; and the arm stole round her waist. "Could you for that love renounce all—give up rank, station, home—all?"

"Freely," she uttered; and at that moment she was sincere. "Freely—so I break this hated tie, and——"

"Forge another where you could love?—*do* love; and, forgetting all false pride, know the only true one—that of the man your soul has elected?—the man equal to you in all things but an empty title?"

"You have taught me to know myself," she whispered; "teach me to read you aright; for my intellect cannot comprehend you, and I doubt, where I would have faith."

"Do not doubt me," he said, coldly releasing her waist, and taking her hand; "I will counsel you well—lead you aright, and for your happiness. Never love, Lady Dora—never love; but if they will you should marry, make Lord Randolph a good and faithful wife, nor cast away your affections on one scarcely worthy of them. He is my friend—if you *must* love, love him; but *I* counsel all, never love, for *I* dread and eschew the passion!" And, dropping her hand, he rose calmly from

the ottoman, and listlessly taking up his hat and gloves, scarcely looking at her, bowed, and quitted the room.

When he was gone she sprang from the ottoman, and, pacing the apartment like one bewildered by a sudden shock, ended by leaning her head on the table, and weeping the bitterest tears she had ever shed; for they were over her crushed pride—her abased heart, which he had probed to the quick, and then, as a worthless toy, cast from him. It was long before she could recall all the scene to her mind, and when she did it might have ended in almost madness had her unfailing pride and self-love not come hand in hand to say, "He loves, and dreads his love. Randolph is his friend—be patient—watchful, and your reward will be, in subduing all his feelings and resolutions."

And thus cheered, she rose, to own to herself that for his love she would brave any thing. She even hated Minnie's memory when she thought, that though it had proved evanescent, as she deemed it had, he certainly *once* loved that girl.

"I will bind him yet, and in iron bands," she cried, as her tall, proud figure strode the room; "not as she did—silk could never hold so bold a heart as his—they shall be iron, and *I* will rivet them; there shall be no key lest another undo them—riveted, Tremenhere—riveted!" and the girl smiled already, in triumph over his defeat.

CHAPTER XVII.

DAYS and days passed away, and Minnie lay almost in death's grasp, and the old man sat beside her as a father might have done, nursing the poor sick woman; his bitterest thought was his own poverty, and her great need of every care. The little money she had by her, was fast disappearing, sickness brings so many unaccustomed claims into a sufferer's room; there was a doctor, too, but here again she learned the charity still existing, despite all march of intellect, or railroad of worldliness; there was this one hallowed thing standing still, since the day of the good Samaritan. Nothing could induce this man to take a fee, and assuredly he came with more interest, and oftener, to see the sick woman, than if gold awaited his palm at every visit. The *concièrge*, too, was all kindness; she kept poor little Miles, and thus the weary days crept on, and nearly a fortnight passed, before Minnie returned to a perfect recollection of the past. When she did so, her first idea was to ask the length of time she had lain thus—two weeks! and in that period what might not have occurred? She struggled to rise from her bed, but her strength failed her; she had no one around in whom

she might confide, feeling her own total incapacity to act, and knowing how necessary it was that some immediate steps should be taken, even though in taking them, her existence would, of necessity, be betrayed. There was but one person of whom she could think in her despair, and this was Mary Burns. Summoning all her fortitude and strength, she in a few, half-coherent words confided to Monsieur Georges that a mystery existed, and imploring caution, and otherwise total silence on his part, she besought him to seek Mary, and telling her a sick woman wished to see her immediately, having something of importance to communicate, beg of her to come, without delay. This he gladly promised to do; for, in his perplexity, he knew not himself where to apply, how to act; in her ravings she had said enough to convince him, some dreadful secret oppressed her. Mary, who had been alone informed by the papers at first of Minnie's supposed fate, and subsequently by Skaife, had mourned her with the sincerity of an humble sister; for some time she had been incapable of almost any exertion of mind or body; there was a blank around her, a disheartenment—for well she knew the purity of the unfortunate victim of Tremenhere's jealousy. When she received the mysterious summons, delivered to her by Georges, not a thought of Minnie crossed her mind; her deep, and truly mourning dress, bespoke her faith in the report of her untimely fate, but, though much puzzled as to whom the person could be desiring to see her, she was too sincere a Christian to refuse the prayer of any

one in trouble. Minnie had said to Monsieur Georges, that she desired to see the person alone; consequently he brought her to the room door, and there left her. The name Deval could not possibly enlighten her at all, and the respectability of the house removed any fear she might otherwise have felt, in following a stranger. It would be impossible for any words adequately to describe her almost supernatural terror, when entering the room alone, on the humble bed, almost pallet, in the pale, worn ghastly face lying there, she beheld Mrs. Tremenhere! Her first feeling was one of doubt, of her own perfect sanity; she thought some extraordinary likeness deceived her, and standing breathless, with clasped hands, she gazed in fear and wonder.

"Mary," whispered Minnie, turning her eyes, now hollow and wild, upon her—"Mary, 'tis I! come to me!" And she stretched forth her thin hands towards her. A shriek burst from the other: it was like an awakening from some dreadful dream. Dropping on her knees beside that bed, she clasped the wan hands in hers, and wept tears of so much heartfelt joy, that years of misery were washed from her memory in that stream of heaven-sent rapture.

In a few brief words, Minnie, raised up, and lying on her bosom, told all, first binding her to solemn secresy about her existence, unless released from it by herself. If Mary wept over her sufferings, her heart became soothed as she wept, feeling that there must be a term to it now. *She* knew Miles even better than his poor wife could; she had known his warm, generous, but

hasty disposition, from boyhood; and even though her heart trembled when the other related the conversation which she had overheard at the opera, nothing could persuade her that he would so soon forget one he had loved as he once had Minnie: and so much does the fond heart of friendship soothe and cheer us, that Minnie too, became calm, and impressed with the conviction of her humble friend.

While they were still conversing, the *concièrge* rapped at the door, carrying little Miles in her arms; and, as Mary clasped the beautiful boy to her bosom, she felt how impossible it would be for Tremenhere to resist so strong an appeal to his heart as this woman and child, or the conviction of the latter's parentage, in whose young face his own every look breathed.

After cheering, again and again, the now calmed woman, Mary hastily quitted, on her search for positive information. This had to be guardedly done, but she thought it might be accomplished through the medium of the waiting-woman of Lady Dora. Accordingly, she hurried home, and, selecting some articles of *lingèrie*, carried them to the Hotel Mirabeau, under pretence that some one had ordered her to bring patterns for selection, for the approval of Lady Dora Vaughan.

It will be remembercd that her person, her present position, both were equally unknown to this lady, who alone knew her by name. Her success was greater than she had at first ventured to hope. *Lingères* and ladies'-maids soon open a conversation together, especially as Mary, having so much at stake, threw off all

her usual reserve, and became a perfect Parisienne in manner. She came, she said, having heard Milady Vaughan was making up a *trousseau*, in hopes some of her *lingèrie* might be worthy of a place in it—taking care, however, to give a wrong name and address. After the usual preliminary of presenting the attendant with a handsome collar, to propitiate her good-will, she learned, with a tremor at first, which ended in amazement and joy, that Lady Dora was going very shortly to be married, but positively to Milord Randolph Gray, who was then in Paris; and the *soubrette*, warmed by the handsome present she had received, threw off all reserve, and spoke in raptures—true Parisian raptures—of her lady's beauty, and the justice it was meeting at the hands of a celebrated painter, a Monsieur Tremenhere, who was pourtraying her as Diana, to please Milord Randolph.

Mary could scarcely contain herself in the bounds of moderation, at this, to her, delightful intelligence; she abridged the visit as much as possible, promising to call again in a few days with more patterns, as Lady Dora was then out. She flew almost to poor Minnie's abode, to whom every moment had been as days. When Mary entered the room, her eyes were wild and excited; one glance, however, sufficed. Minnie read so much real joy in the other's kind face, that she fell back on her pillow almost fainting, from her previously overwrought feelings.

"Cheer up, madam—dear madam, I bring you joy-

ful news!" exclaimed the other; and she hurriedly related all she had heard.

Minnie could not utter a word for many moments; then, as memory of those words crossed her mind, she could but torture herself with a solution of them, by supposing that Lady Dora's pride had stood between them. Not all Mary could urge against it, could banish the idea; and all she could do was to promise secresy, and employ means to discover the truth. She left, but only to make some necessary arrangements, and then return. One thing she resolved upon doing, and this she put into immediate practice—namely, to write to Mr. Skaife without hinting a word of the truth, but implored him to lose not a day in coming to Paris, asking secresy to all on the subject of her request—a hint of Minnie she durst not give; she only spoke of the absolute necessity there existed for his immediate arrival. This done, she felt at ease; and returning to Minnie's, after providing many little comforts until then unknown there, she took up her abode beside that sick-bed, and watched with delight the change a few hours had made in that sick woman, whose mind diseased had defied all medicine. Our good deeds, not unfrequently even in this world, bring home their ripe fruits! Here was the girl whom she had taken from error to her bosom, from poverty to be almost her friend, now in this extreme moment, soothing, consoling, and returning to her all she had herself given her; and Mary's eye filled with honest joy as she felt this. Could she have laid down her life she would freely have done it, to prove all her

gratitude. It was, in truth, a day when Minnie was made to feel that our good gifts often return tenfold to us. She did not in her peace forget him, who had watched over her in sickness and delirium. She had explained to Mary all she knew of Monsieur Georges; and, as the shades of evening were closing in, Minnie heard the stealthy step plodding up and down his solitary room. He feared to intrude now, knowing she had a friend to watch and guard her.

"Oh!" cried she, "I have forgotten poor Monsieur Georges in all my selfish happiness. Mary, open that door, and say I would speak with him—will you? He has been indeed both father and friend to me!" Mary rose hastily to obey, and re-entered, almost dragging in the poor, solitary old man, from his own cold, comfortless chamber; for he was poorer than ever, having spent every *sou* he could command on the sick woman who had befriended him.

"Come in—pray, come in!" cried Minnie, stretching out a hand to him. "Come, and see how much better I am to-night; and your little boy, too, see how calmly he is sleeping beside me. You must not forget him; he has more than once slept in your arms when mine were powerless to retain him."

Georges stooped over the bed, and a tear fell on her cheek, as the shivering man pressed his lips to her forehead.

"My child," he said, "I never can forget you or him; you seem as something belonging to me, and yet I must lose you soon. I know you will recover, and go among

friends. I felt from the first, your being as you were must have a cruel mystery attached to it—all will clear away for you, you are so good, and then you will go, and I shall remain!" and the desolate old man's voice trembled.

"I will never forsake you!" exclaimed Minnie. "I could not; you have been with me in too much sorrow, for me ever to forget you! The friends of those hours we may not banish, like the ones who pass with our laughter."

"I cannot account for it, Monsieur Georges," said Mary; "but from the first moment I saw you, your face seemed to me like one I had known, though altered by time, in some far away days of childhood; and yet it cannot be, for I am not a native of France."

"They say," he replied, "that not two persons in the world resemble one another; yet there are likenesses so strong, you may have seen some one like me. The impressions of childhood, on thoughtful minds, come across us, like dreams in after years."

"Oh!" she answered, "it is not alone your face and figure, but something in the tone of your voice is, and was from the first, most familiar, though dreamy."

She gazed earnestly, as she spoke, at the dignified, though bent figure of the old man, as he sat beside the stove, where the light of the lamp fell on his venerable head and silvered hair.

"There is something," he said, "I have intended asking, when our poor invalid should be better. I do not want to pry into, perhaps painful family secrets, for few

are exempt from these," he sighed deeply; "but there can be no indiscretion in my inquiring, I hope, whether the name of 'Tremenhere,' which she uttered so frequently in her ravings, is one of family connection, or merely of acquaintanceship."

"Tremenhere!" exclaimed Minnie, and the truth hung on her lip, yet something of fear of betrayal withheld her from uttering it. "Do you know the name?" she inquired, changing her original thought, and supporting herself on her arm, she looked anxiously at him.

"I did," he answered, "long ago."

"Where?" asked Mary, fixing a surprised look on his face.

"Far from hence," he replied. "Abroad, and in England."

"For mercy's sake!" exclaimed Minnie, "tell me, my good father (for such indeed you have been to me,) what Tremenhere did you know—the name is so uncommon?"

"One," he answered, "whom you cannot have known, at least I think not, for he had no daughter—only one child—a son."

"Do not hesitate; you may freely speak before me," cried Mary, anxiously; "you little know, perhaps, what your words may lead to. *I am sure* I have seen you—heard your voice."

"How can that be?" he asked, still doubting what it were prudent to do. "You would have forgotten me, you must have been so young, had we ever met. I should remember you, for I am an old man."

"Were you ever in Yorkshire?" asked Mary, with a trembling voice. Something stilled Minnie's tongue; she could not speak.

"Yorkshire!" he cried in almost terror. "Do you mean at an old manor-house?"

"Come here," whispered Minnie, scarcely audible. She felt something strange was surrounding her. "Come nearer—here, beside me. I am too weak to speak loud —there," and she clasped his hand. "Father, by the love you have shown me—to me, a poor orphan child, a deserted wife—tell me, who are you? My name is Tremenhere, and I know the manor-house well; it *was* my husband's father's!"

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Georges, in agitation. "Then how are you thus? and how have we met? Tell me—is your husband the son—the only son of the *late* Miles Tremenhere, of the manor-house? for you speak of the father as being no more."

Mary sat speechless, and yet she knew not what her hopes or fears were; she was in a stupor.

"Miles Tremenhere, the son, is my husband," answered Minnie; "but he has forsaken me—forsaken me!" and her tears gushed forth.

"I will tell you," said Mary, in a whisper, drawing near and clasping Minnie in her arms. "This poor lady has been the victim of a villain, Marmaduke Burton, who, when old Mr. Tremenhere died, put in a claim to the property, on the plea of the son's illegitimacy; and, having driven him forth, was not content without de-

stroying his young wife's fame, to drive him to desperation."

"Illegitimacy!" exclaimed Georges, like one in a dream. "That was false; for *I* married his parents—baptized him!"

"Oh!" shrieked Minnie, starting from Mary's arms, and grasping his arm; "your name then is not Georges —'tis d'Estrées!"

"I will tell you all, my poor child," he said, when his overflowing tears had subsided; and he leaned over the pillow, where lay the pale and exhausted Minnie from over-excitement. "I was chaplain in Gibraltar to Lord Dillon, who was governor there, and I knew, and became most intimate with Tremenhere, who was quartered there. For family reasons he did not wish his marriage with Helena Nunoz, with whom he had become acquainted, known to any one, on account of the obscurity of her family, during his father's lifetime. I married them privately: shortly afterwards they left for England: here, in Paris, they were re-married on account of her religion, she insisted upon it, by a catholic priest: all was legally, correctly done. Mr. Tremenhere was too good a man to have it otherwise. When his wife, than whom a better creature never existed, was near her confinement, he felt desirous the child should be baptized by me; and for that purpose I obtained permission of Lord Dillon, who had quitted Gibraltar, to go to Yorkshire, and there the ceremony was performed, and registered, in the parish church.

"True," answered Mary, "but no one could discover whither Mr. d'Estrées who officiated had gone; besides, 'twas the marriage which was disputed, not baptism."

"I have now," he continued sighing, "to touch upon a passage of agony in my own life, which will account for my concealment. Shortly afterwards I quitted Lord Dillon, sufficiently provided for, for all moderate wants; I had a son of my own, a fine youth of fourteen. After leaving his lordship, at Mr. Tremenhere's prayer I repaired to Yorkshire with my son, who was to be as companion and friend to his son, then a boy of ten; all was happiness and peace for nearly a year. There was something in my child I could never fully understand—a disposition difficult to govern; something not open and candid—but I hoped time might make him otherwise, and the society of those around him. A year passed—I will but touch upon this; it is too painful," the poor father trembled as he spoke. The manor-house was robbed one night; after a long, painful investigation, you may guess my horror at the discovery, my son was implicated in it. A sum to a considerable amount had been abstracted from Mr. Tremenhere's old cabinet; he, in mercy to me, hushed up the affair; my son fled, and I became a broken-hearted man. To stay was impossible; Mr. Tremenhere felt this too, so I left, to the deep regret of himself and his angel wife. Little more remains to be said—after awhile, all communication ceased between us, my unhappy boy discovered me, with him I shared the little I had, and he went to America, promising me to reform. I have never heard

from him, and I became as Monsieur Georges what you see!"

"Do you not remember me?" asked Mary, pale with emotion and memory. "I was Mary Burns, the child whom you have often caressed; I knew I had seen you in days of youth!"

Let us pass over the remainder of this scene; Mary told him all that which was strange to him, but what our readers already know. Minnie could but weep in joy, in hope; for now, indeed, she had a rich present to lay at Miles's feet—a mother's fame!

"Think, my dear child," he said, when all was told, "that the night your kind heart (for I read it truly) called the shivering old man to your fire, your guardian angel led him in to bring you a blessing. And you will be blessed; doubt it not—here with your husband's love, hereafter with a better than even that, for our good deeds come home to roost far more than our bad ones; there is much mercy around us, poor, weak, mortal children, that we are."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SKAIFE arrived in Paris, and, after a lengthened interview with Mary, he quitted her abode. If he was very pale, it was the pallor of sudden, and almost deemed impossible, joy. Minnie lived! and he was wending his way to a now scarcely sad chamber, where Hope sat beside the still pale, but recovering woman, reclining near a cheerful wood blaze, in a more comfortable, though still very humble, room. This is all she would consent to at Mary's expense; for personal resources she had none. Skaife found himself incapable of much speech; he could but press Minnie's hand between his own with the affection of a brother, to whom a loved sister was suddenly restored from death. He, however, endeavoured to persuade her to return at once to Gatestone, promising her a joyful welcome from all, who mourned her loss severely. To this she was deaf; nothing could induce her to quit Paris, and leave Tremenhere's vicinity. Skaife had bound himself, by a solemn promise, not to reveal her existence without her permission, unless he saw the absolute necessity for so doing, to prevent the marriage of Tremenhere with Lady Dora. After vainly endeavouring to urge her to another course,

he quitted the house to visit Miles, and, if possible, discover what his real feelings were; for a certain pride prevented Minnie from throwing herself at his feet, until she knew whether his heart still remembered her.

Our readers will recollect, that she knew nothing of his visit to Marseilles—his conviction of her innocence. She only knew the fatal words, which, ringing in her ears, had driven her frantic—his avowed love for Lady Dora. Tremenhere was pained and surprised by Skaife's visit. He felt in himself so guilty towards Minnie, that one who had known all her worth seemed as an accusing spirit. Skaife's manner, too, after the first hasty meeting, was so embarrassed, that it added to the suffering his presence inflicted.

It would have been impossible for a friend to look upon Miles without reading all his deep care, however veiled to the world in general;—there was the clouded eye, without fire, full of soul and expression; but the changing fire was gone—'twas one settled, calm, uncomplaining trouble. Skaife spoke of his journey to Paris as one of mere pleasure; of course Minnie's family was never alluded to. Miles had been painting when the other entered, and drawing the cover, of which Lord Randolph had spoken, over the easel, he rose to welcome him with a start of pleasure, which, however, almost instantaneously settled into a look of pain and embarrassment. For some time they spoke on indifferent subjects, things most difficult to find for two so closely drawn together in one painful one. There was a moment's pause, when Tremenhere suddenly exclaimed—

"Skaife, I am surprised—much surprised, to see you here."

"How so?" the other asked, colouring, and amazed.

"Because, were I in your place, I should shun the atmosphere where breathed such another as myself, like that of a pest-house."

"Pardon me, Tremenhere, you would do as I do—feel sincere pity for a man, whose severest punishment must be his own bitter remorse and regret."

Tremenhere looked silently at him a moment.

"You have indeed said truly," he uttered at last, and turned away towards the covered picture before him.

"Tremenhere," said Skaife, laying a hand on his arm, "I rejoice to hear you speak as you do; for vain as it may be, 'twill solace you all the remaining years of your life to remember *her*—as she was. You see I know to what you allude."

"Remember her, Skaife! What can that do for me? Remember that, but for the insane promptings of some demon, jealous of my happiness, I might now have her beside me, a living, breathing creature, instead of only this!" And he drew back the veil from his painting, and there, on the speaking canvass, was Minnie—oh, Minnie, as though she breathed before him! There is nothing so faithful as memory. It was an altar-piece, of which he had before spoken—a Madonna and child. The eyes looked forth serene and beautiful, patient, and with that predestined look which such a face should have—a look of future sorrow, future and immortal hope. Minnie's was all a face should be for

so holy a purpose; and when Skaife remembered all she had suffered, he felt how well Tremenhere had chosen the subject, to call her features into life's seeming.

"It is like her, is it not?" asked the latter, fixing his deep, earnest gaze upon the face. "And I have tried to throw into the countenance something of the trouble I *have* seen there—something of what must have been, when she was at Marseilles! Skaife, I went there a week since, and learned all; since my return, I have passed the heavy hours of day and night in pourtraying the look which I divined hers, in that sad room where my child was born!"

"Have you been there?" exclaimed the other, a joy almost beyond controul bursting his heart; for he had come to that room in fear, of what he might hear.

"Yes," answered Tremenhere, looking up, surprised at his tone; "but I do not think you quite understand me, by your tone. I have been in the humble house of the toiling woman and mother—of the one I lured from every luxury, to cast, with a blighted name, into *want!* —want, Skaife—for this she has known! *Now* do you comprehend my utter wretchedness? Oh, believe that there can be no sorrow, no remorse like mine! I sit here for hours searching in my memory for every tone of her voice, every look of her sweet face! I tell *you* this, for self-abasement; *you*, at least shall know me as I am, though to the world I may be a mystery—to some, a monster!"

"From my soul I pity you, Tremenhere; but oh! I

rejoice that her memory is now so sacred in your eyes from stain."

"Sacred and pure as an angel's, Skaife! Yet what can that avail now?"

"I feared," uttered the other, "that—I scarcely know how to speak my thought—that, in short, you might be—were, dazzled by Lady Dora Vaughan!"

"By her!" and he laughed in derision. "Have you, too, known the human heart so ill, to suppose that, having once loved Minnie, even though unjust, cruel, her murderer, I could ever place another, and such a one as Lady Dora, near her? No, no; be my feelings what they may, I never will dream even of so vain a thing as alleviating them by any union; still less with Lady Dora, than another!"

"I have, nevertheless, heard strange rumours."

"Have you? well, 'tis well. I would have it thus; 'tis——" He paused. "Let us change the subject," he said hastily; "time will prove all of us."

They were silent some moments.

"Do you know what grieves me most in this my task?" He pointed to the picture. "I cannot find in my mind a thought of what *our* child was like. I would I could thus complete my subject. But all is a blank!" He pointed to the infant, of which there was but an outline; indeed, all but the Madonna's face was this only, for he had not long commenced the picture, which had been one ordered some time previously.

A sudden thought struck Skaife.

"I was visiting in a house, yesterday," he said, "and

there was struck by the unearthly beauty of a boy I saw in the arms of the *concièrge*. I asked to whom it belonged, and was told, to a poor woman residing in the house. I make no doubt I could induce them to bring the child to you—it is the loveliest I ever saw."

"Thank you, Skaife," he answered sadly; "but I do not think *any* child could give me the faintest idea of what hers must have been; it must have had a look of more than mortal sorrow on its young face, born in so much woe and care. I will try and dream what it could have been; nothing living can even pourtray it."

Skaife said no more on the subject; but, leaving shortly afterwards, hastened to Minnie, and with thankfulness of joy, watched the calm beam of hope in her eye, when he told her all that had passed between them. Skaife urged her to allow him, by degrees, to break the truth to her sorrowing husband; but there was still on her memory, unobliterated, the recollection of his words to her cousin, which nothing could efface, but proof to the contrary. One thing, however, they arranged, and Monsieur d'Estrées was the person chosen to carry out the scheme—namely, to take little Miles, or William as he was called, to his father's studio. The child had become so accustomed to the old man during Minnie's illness, that he would go any where unfearingly with him. We should vainly attempt to depict the mother's feelings, when she saw her boy next day departing under the care of her two sincere friends, to see his father for the first time. Thrice she called them back in mother's pride to arrange some curl on the noble brow, or again

kiss the cheek, where perhaps his lip might be pressed. There was something hallowing in the thought to her beautiful mind, that their child should be the medium of communication between them, though to him unknown. Skaife had previously written to apprise Tremenhere, that at that hour he should call; and when he entered, and after a few moments, by way of prefacing the visit, mentioned he had asked a friend of the mother's, who often nursed the child in her absence, to call with him. Tremenhere coolly thanked him; at the same time expressing his firm conviction, that it could not answer his views or exalted ideas of what it should be. When d'Estrées entered as Monsieur Georges, and the boy with a quiet, contemplative air, most uncommon in one so young, looked in childish questioning at the tall, dark, strange man, Tremenhere stood transfixed. It was not that a look of the mother shook his heart—it was not the thought, that of such an age would his own be, were it living. No, it was the artist's realized dream—such a dream as inspiration might have given him. A child born in so much sorrow could not look as others would; every beautiful lineament was grave as of early woe, if so young a heart might feel it; but yet this was more—it was a soul's sorrow implanted by a mother's cares, watered by her tears, on the boy's countenance. Tremenhere looked at him, then at the old man—a memory crossed his imagination.

"Surely I have seen you before," he cried, gazing earnestly at d'Estrées.

"I think not, monsieur," said the other; but his voice

trembled, for he, too, remembered him, and then he so ably recalled his father and d'Estrées's best friend to his mind; "for I am an old man, seldom leaving home." He spoke in French.

"Strange—strange!" he replied in thought; "you seem very familiar to me."

"And the boy?" asked Skaife; "is he not all I promised you?"

"He might have been *hers*," was the reply, which spoke volumes. He approached, and the child used to many strange faces looked fearlessly upon him, but with the strange, grave look we have before noticed. Tremenhere opened his arms, and the little boy's were around his neck, and the eyes, so like his own, fixed upon him. Something for the first time passed through the father's heart; he thought of his own, and involuntarily passed his hand over the head, where the golden curls were springing up, thick and clustering. He turned up the little unsmiling face, and his stern lip pressed the baby cheek.

"Bless you, my boy!" he whispered.

Strange, he never asked his name, or any thing about him, but gazed, and gazed on the face in bitterness of thought. As he did so, he turned towards the picture. The child stared a moment—the eyes distended—and then the whole sad face lighted up with a smile of angel beauty, as he paid the highest compliment which could be offered to Miles's art, by stretching forth his arms towards it; and the little tongue tried to syllable a name. The boy knew his mother!

D'Estrées and Skaife turned pale, as a hasty glance passed between them: they deemed it impossible so strange a recognition could pass unsuspected: they trembled for the moment of avowal. But Miles's mind was obscured from all thought of the truth; he only saw a childish rapture on beholding a picture; and again kissing the boy and hastily passing him to d'Estrées, seated himself at the easel, and beneath his pencil placed the outline of his boy in its mother's arms.

Tremenhere had resolved upon one thing both as a duty—a sacred one—and secondly, if possible, to give some more healthy tone to his heart, by the necessity for activity of mind and body. This was, to labour for the means of proceeding to Gibraltar, to seek proof of his mother's marriage. With his conviction of Minnie's innocence, this thought had sprung up with renewed vigour; for this reason he remained more at home, working at the picture for which his own unknown child was daily sitting. For this, when completed, he expected a large sum, with which he purposed at once proceeding to Gibraltar. Moreover, it was a labour of love, though of deep sorrow; for Minnie lived again before him, and the hours passed, in contemplating the face and form perfecting beneath his hand.

Lady Dora was lost in vain conjectures as to the cause of his estrangement; though a momentary doubt might arise, yet her unfailing pride came in to soothe her—"he durst not trust himself!" Thus she thought, and with this conviction arose a determination to go to his studio; this was not difficult of accom-

plishment. By a cleverly turned hint to her mother about Lord Randolph's impatience respecting her picture, Lady Ripley wrote, expressing a desire for its completion, as soon as he conveniently might attend to it; and soliciting an hour when Lady Dora might give him a sitting. This lady so arranged it, that her mother asked from herself without naming any impatience on her part, but Tremenhere smiled in scorn and triumph; for he saw the whole affair, as though it had been planned beneath his eye. He wrote, regretting much occupation had obliged him to banish himself from her ladyship's circle; for the happy indolence which there crept over him, unfitted him for other less pleasing occupations, but fixing an hour in which he should be too happy to see Lady Dora. Every line of this had been guardedly penned; and each word had a signification in that lady's eyes, flattering to herself. Lord Randolph had seen him several times, and always reported something about the mysteriously veiled picture; she was convinced in her own mind, that this was some portrait of herself, and she resolved, if practicable, to verify the fact; however, when she arrived there with an appearance of calm dignity, accompanied by her mother, nothing was to be seen but herself as Diana on the easel, and as unfinished as when she had last seen it. This confirmed her impression of some strange mystery; and Tremenhere's suffering face, which nothing could disguise, made her heart bound high in triumphant pride—it was suffering on her account. His manner still further strengthened this deep error on her part,—her mother accompanied

her, consequently their words, beyond mere general ones, were few; still, when she spoke of his absenting himself from all society, the significance with which he whispered, "Better live with a sad memory, than a vain and dangerous reality," lost nothing of the effect he intended it to convey. The real truth was, he felt too worn in spirit, even for revenge sake, just then to continue his comedy with herself—he had only courage to suffer; but his absenting himself was as politic a thing as he could have done; and she left the studio with a tremor in her heart, of which she had thought herself incapable—one which not a little startled her yet rebelling pride, and made her look every hour with deeper gloom, or nervous excitement, on the preparations which were progressing for her marriage with Lord Randolph, whom she almost hated, and yet had not the courage to come to an open rupture with, lest Tremenhere should quite read her heart. She was bent upon bringing him to her feet, and then permitting a hope to gleam over his doubts.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHE was in this mood one day when he called, and found her in a tête-à-tête with Lord Randolph. She was dressed *à l'Amazone*, for her horse was awaiting its lovely mistress below.

"I have arrived *mal à propos*," he said, after the salutations of meeting were over. "I see your ladyship is going out."

"Come with us," asked Lord Randolph, shaking his hand warmly. "A gallop will chase away the clouds of study from your brow. Lady Dora, did you ever behold so altered a face? Why, man, your studio will be the death of you."

"Not *that*," he replied, looking gloomily downwards; then, as suddenly raising his head, he seemed to chase away shades and clouds, for the face became calm and smiling.

"Will you take me *en croupe?*" he asked, addressing Lord Randolph, in answer to his question. "I saw but two horses below—yours and Lady Dora's."

"Oh, no! I will send my groom away, if you will mount his. You must accompany us."

"Lady Dora says nothing; the lady may have too much excellent taste to admire a trio. In my opinion much pleasure is often lost in them, either in music or society."

"How so, Mr. Tremenhere?" she asked coldly.

"Why," he answered, laughing,—"there are the soprano, the contralto, and the mezzo; this last I have ever looked upon as an almost indistinct, useless sort of 'lend-its-aid' to support and show off the other two."

"Then I'll play mezzo," cried Lord Randolph good-humouredly, but with singular, though unconscious truth; "for I have a bad headache, and you two shall sing, and I will listen, occasionally throwing in a note."

"Don't let it be one of discord," cried Tremenhere, in the same tone as before. "We must have harmony; if Lady Dora consent to this, I will gladly take your groom's horse."

Her eyes said more than her lips, as she replied—"We shall be most happy of your company."

"Might I have chosen a character, in which to have handed Lady Dora down, by my humble skill, to posterity, I should have selected her present one. Lady, I never saw you so perfect as in your Amazonian costume; it suits your style far better than Diana even," and Tremenhere bent his eyes in well-schooled admiration upon her; still the effort was not an immense one, for, as an artist, he could not but have admired her perfection of beauty in this dress; then, too, she was grace personified in the management of a spirited horse, which seemed as a part of herself in pride of beauty.

"Why do you object to Diana?" she inquired, fixing her full gaze upon him undauntedly, in all its fire.

"Diana," said Lord Randolph, before the other could reply, "conveys to my mind the idea of a lady over

fond of being out at night, not a loving bride or wife," and he laughed significantly at Lady Dora, who turned away towards Tremenhere.

"You have not answered my question," she said.

"Something of Lord Randolph's thought is mine," he replied. "Diana is cold, uncheered, uncheering; she sails onward in her dignity and splendour, surrounded by satellites, uncaring for them all, beautiful, but unloving."

"What do you say to Endymion?" she asked, and her glance crossed his.

"She loved him, and he slept!" was the calm reply.

"That was *his* fault; 'she could not wake his eyelids with her kiss,'" fell from her lips.

"Because," answered Tremenhere, "it was too queenly, too cold; had Venus embraced him, he would have started into waking life and love!" Her eye fell beneath his glance.

"The 'Mezzo' must put in a note," said Lord Randolph.

At the word "Mezzo," a gentle, but involuntary laugh escaped from Lady Dora. Tremenhere was grave. He despised while he played with this girl; and, turning to the other, asked in a tone almost too serious and feeling for the occasion, "What is your thought?"

"I think Diana was an arrant, heartless flirt, and certainly deceitful. She assumed to herself a character not deserved—a strictly chaste goddess would never have come down o' night to embrace a shepherd on a hill. I

think it is very fortunate he *did* sleep; had he awakened, he would have had a very different opinion of the lady, and have been fully justified in nodding significantly when her name was mentioned. I only wonder she should have told of herself; for unless she did so—how was this midnight visit known?"

"Oh! she perhaps wanted the cleverness which some possess, of keeping her own counsel," answered Tremenhere.

"Most probably," hazarded Lady Dora, not liking to keep too painful a silence where the subject had become so strangely epigrammatic, "some star betrayed her mistress."

"True!" replied Tremenhere, "as in 'Love's Witnesses,'" and he repeated in a soft, impressive voice—

"Love! when we last night, embracing,
Sigh'd farewell—who saw us part?
Was it night? or sly Aurora?
Or the stars? or the moon who heard?"

"A star shot down and told the ocean—
Ocean told a mariner;
Then the mariner told his mistress;
She—she told it every where!"

"'Gad, that's how Madam Diana's escapade became known, I bet my life!" cried Lord Randolph.

She did not reply; she was dreaming over the tone in which "Love! when we last night, embracing," had dropped from his lips, and was lost in that tone's significance, which sent up the harmony to her eyes, with

which her softened glance lit on Tremenhere's; and then faded into shade beneath her trembling lashes, consumed, Phœnix-like, by its own fire.

"Then Diana was cruel, too," continued Lord Randolph, hunting down the huntress. "Unsparing with her darts; the wound from which, like wound of hart, never heals!"

"Let her rest," said Lady Dora, fixing a full look of meaning on Tremenhere; "those skilled in venery say, there *is* a balm for wound of hart."

"Yes, from the animal which has inflicted it," answered Tremenhere.

"Let us have a canter!" cried Lady Dora, starting off down an avenue of the *Bois de Boulogne*, where the sand deadened the sound of their flying horses' feet. It was a lovely day, and there were groups of equestrians. They had ridden some time, when they met three or four gentlemen together. After bowing *en passant*, Lord Randolph suddenly stopped—

"That's Gillingham!" he exclaimed; "and riding the very horse he wants me to buy. Lady Dora, may I leave you five minutes, *à regret*, however, on my own account, under Tremenhere's care. I will rejoin you near the pond."

She merely bowed.

"Beware of the '*Mare au Diable!*'" cried Tremenhere to him, as he cantered off. "Have you read George Sand's tale of that name?" asked he of Lady Dora.

"No; that is, I am not certain of having done so—what is the plot?"

"Oh! one full of intense interest; simply told, and of simple persons. It may not interest you."

"I like simplicity," she replied.

"Do you? I am glad to hear that. True feeling is *always* simple, meek, and confiding."

"But the tale?" she asked, to change his tone. She wanted time to prepare herself for a *tête-à-tête*. She began to fear her own sudden impulses.

"Well," he said, "the plot is told in a few words; 'tis the working out of various feelings which is so perfect:—A man loves a girl whom he should not love——"

"Why?" and she stilled her heart, and looked calmly at him.

"Because *he* was rich, and *she* only a poor, simple, peasant girl. Could I *reverse* the case, I might find tongue to speak more eloquently on the subject; as it is, I can only tell your ladyship facts."

"And what were these facts?"

"They journeyed together, on horseback—*not* as *we* are doing, but in more primitive style, she on a pillion behind him. *He was a young widower*"—(these words were each distinctly articulated)—"and his boy rode before him, on his knee: 'tis a pretty scene! Night, however, comes on, and they lose their way, and at last find themselves beside the '*Mare au Diable*,' noted as fatal to all approaching it; and beside this they pass the night."

"And?" she asked, deeply interested.

"The place *was* fatal; for Love was the spirit there. Probably," he added, laughing, "as *Le Diable* is often said to '*émporte l'amour*,' he might have brought him to that spot. Certain it is, there he was, and he prompted two, to know their own hearts who had never known them before."

"I am all impatience for the conclusion."

"I am a bad story-teller; besides, the case is so *completely* against *my* position, that I cannot fully, soulfully, enter into it; however, I will satisfy your ladyship's impatience. Hearts *will* speak at last—theirs did; and he, for her sake, relinquished a rich marriage, station, all—and married the simple girl."

"And was happy?"

"Blest—so the tale has it; and never looked back to the '*Mare au Diable*' without a feeling of gratitude. Here we are at the pond, Lady Dora. I wonder where Lord Randolph is!"

"I cannot think love so hastily created," she said, not attending to his other words; "'tis of slower growth."

"*Growth!* yes; but I tried to give you the author's idea. They, unacknowledged, loved one another a long time, and a word opened their eyes to the truth."

"There are few who make sacrifices for love," she replied, "and such, when made, are seldom appreciated."

"Pardon me, we differ. When *truly* made, from sincere affection, we bow down in almost adoration of the giver—'tis so sweet to give! The heart feels so light

when it has yielded all its store; buoyant and healthful, it only grieves at its own poverty and ungathering powers; for it would fain, like a bee, renew the sweet store, to carry all home to one hive."

"How may we know such a gift would be prized?"

"By reading in a never closed page, by the eyes writ; but some do not love making sacrifices,—they cost dear."

She felt, if this subject were continued in this strain, her courage would fail her. "Not yet!" she thought; "he shall suffer for all I felt the day he quitted me so abruptly."

"Sacrifices are foolish things," she said aloud; "good for boys and girls—men do not value them; they are like water poured on the ground."

"Which brings forth flowers," he added; "but I quite agree with you, they *are* foolish; but then the mere human heart cannot boast of unerring wisdom. How stupid it is," he said, changing his tone, "to be walking round this *mare!* This is no god or *diable* there; let us pursue that avenue before us; we will return hither. Now," he continued, when they were side by side in a quiet alley, "tell me *how* one may school the heart not to offer itself up in sacrifice?"

"There is no such thing as an appreciated sacrifice," she said proudly, "for a woman; to offer one, there must be a not desecrated altar—man's heart never *could* be such; they are all deceitful, and profaned—on the like, I should trample as on a reptile!"

"It might turn, and leave an unerring sting."

"How? I do not understand you!"

"In bruising a weed, we may trample on a flower; and our own heart never arise to vigour or life again." As he spoke, he leaned almost over her saddle-bow, and looked in her face.

"I do not fear that, but we were speaking of the thing we *dare* not love. Such a love I would look upon, in all its phases, till my eye grew tired, and my heart sunk to rest."

"What constitutes that which we *dare* not love?"

"The thing we should sacrifice too much in loving, and, so doing, lose our own weight in the balance, and—

"And," he interrupted, "be slighted by the person we *fear* to love, not being certain of gaining love for love, and gratitude, everlasting gratitude, for the word which raised us from despair to generous hope!"

Her hand trembled on the bridle-rein, his eyes were fixed upon her downcast lid, and her lip was quivering with its effort not to speak. At that moment a close carriage passed them, in which was an invalid, a lady, and child. It was going very slowly—the invalid was Minnie, the child and woman, little Miles and Mary. This latter endeavoured to veil the vision before them by leaning across, but Minnie had seen all; his look, air, their closely-drawn figures, and grasping Mary's hand she became pale as death. Mary had been urging, and she had almost consented to Skaife's telling Tremenhere that she lived!

"Oh, I have done well to refuse!" she cried. "Mere sufferance from him would kill me! Oh, would that I were dead!—would that he were free! Then he might

marry her! Poor Miles—poor Miles, he never will be happy! Were I gone, her proud heart would not perhaps reject him at last; I know her well, and how difficult his task must be; is he not deserving all pity? He *thought* he loved me, to awaken and know another held his heart in bondage! He loves her well! no wonder he looks so sad and ill: poor Miles!" and the generous heart bled more for him than for its own breaking sorrow!'

A few moments afterwards, Lady Dora and her too attendant suitors passed the quiet carriage in a hand-canter.

CHAPTER XX.

DAYS passed after the events related in the last chapter, and Tremenhere did not make his appearance in Lady Ripley's apartments, at l'Hotel Mirabeau; to a person of Lady Dora's despotic temper, his conduct was maddening. He never lost an opportunity of uttering words leading her to believe his affections entangled beyond remedy; no one could look at him without seeing that he suffered keenly from some mental cause, and something of recent occurrence; therefore, it was not Minnie's loss—but this she would not permit herself to think for a moment—no, 'twas herself; consequently his manner of acting was the more inexplicable. He never sought her, but when they met; he seemed unable to controul his feelings, his avowal of love; but this was not all she would have. She would have him throw himself, a slave enchained before her, beseeching her love, to loosen his bonds, or rivet them for ever. In her impatient rage she hated all, even Lord Randolph at last, for the very friendship he had for Tremenhere. It was this, she thought, which, acting on an overstrained (to her) idea of honour, prevented his admitting all, and claiming a return. Her every thought became bitterness. Nothing is nearer love than hate; they are two extremes a

child's tiny hand might unite. Thus, then, she fostered in absence a bitter hatred towards Tremenhere, which melted like a waxen flower in the sun when he approached, and became quite as impressionable, capable of any feeling he might stamp there in its place. In her rage she looked around for some one wherewith to wound him, and the thought after appeared in the person of Marmaduke Burton, who returned to Paris from a long tour in Italy and elsewhere. Coward-like, he had fled at first, then, not finding himself pursued, he stopped, and, looking around, thought he had deserted the field too soon.

It was at a ball Lady Dora met him, nearly a week after the events of the past chapter. He stood for a moment uncertain how to act. She knew Tremenhere was there; they had just spoken, and he had passed on. In an instant she saw her advantage—for so she deemed it; and, holding out a hand, cordially welcomed Burton's return amongst them. Her mother, among others, had almost dropped the acquaintance, in consequence of the coward slur attached to his name; but so completely was Lady Dora mistress of all around her, that her mother, though still doubting the policy of it, remembering how decidedly Lord Randolph had cut him, was fain to receive him politely when Lady Dora came up, leaning on his arm.

"I will bend him now!" she thought, as she reflected upon the only one occupying her mind. As she moved through the rooms, she met Lord Randolph, who was seeking her.

He started: Marmaduke looked embarrassed, and then attempted to smile; but the other was one of those to whom wealth was as dross, compared with honour. All the weaker parts of his character were sinking to the bottom, and the more sterling ones rising to the surface. Possibly it was from constant association with so noble a mind as Tremenhere's—and Lady Lysson's, too. Be it as it may, the struggling artist was more to him than the wealthy but dishonourable Burton. Without glancing at him, he held out an arm to Lady Dora, saying—

"Will you take my arm? I have been seeking you; Lady Lysson is anxious to speak to you."

"Thank you," she replied with *hauteur;* "but you must see I am otherwise engaged—I am going to dance with Mr. Burton. Allow me to recall to your memory, an old friend."

Lord Randolph took not the slightest notice. This cool reprehension of her conduct, the unworthy motive of which she was thus doubly made to feel, drove her frantic, and she turned aside with a—

"Come, Mr. Burton—we shall be late for this *deux temps!*"

Lord Randolph moved another way, and looked anxiously about him. He soon perceived the object of his search, as Tremenhere's tall figure rose before him.

"Come along, Tremenhere," he said, familiarly linking his arm in his—"I want to show you somebody."

"Any one I know?" asked the other unsuspectingly.

"A very pretty girl," replied Lord Randolph.

"Indeed! But where is Lady Dora?"

"Lady Dora?—oh, there!" And he pointed her out, where she stood with Burton. A thrill passed through Tremenhere's frame, and the other felt it: the former felt all the delicacy and thought which had made Lord Randolph take him thus boldly by the arm, to publish his feelings towards him to his cousin; and also leading him, as a jockey takes his horse up and shows him what he has to overleap, lest he should shy at the difficulties suddenly placed before him.

"Gray!" exclaimed he—using a term hitherto never uttered in his proud humility—"you are a good, generous, noble fellow; I thank you!" And he grasped his hand.

These few words were volumes from him, and the other felt them so. As they moved on, not another word passed on the subject, and shortly afterwards the two met Lady Dora and Burton; and Tremenhere's countenance was free and unclouded, as he stopped and reminded her of a prior engagement for the following dance. Burton looked cowed and uneasy: her rage almost broke through the bounds of politeness, for in her heart she despised Burton, and now doubly so when her revenge had failed, and she saw herself abased in the abasement of her *protegé*. She was almost rude in speech as she acknowledged the engagement, and appointed where he might find her, this *valse* concluded.

And during these heavy hours poor Minnie sat at home in her sorrow. She had refused to leave the house since the day she met Lady Dora and Tremenhere;

nothing could persuade her but that he loved her cousin: he might regret *her* sad fate, but he loved Dora. She urged Skaife to give him the proof of his mother's fame—of his own legitimacy; but Skaife had resolved that she alone should lay this treasure, in reconcilation, at her husband's feet. Moreover, Skaife was a man of the world, and though he knew Tremenhere *now* loved only Minnie, he had justly read her cousin and Lady Ripley; and he knew man as he too generally is, easily led by his vanity and a woman's love, even against his better reason and judgment. He saw Lady Dora loved Tremenhere, and felt assured only the "poor artist" stood between her love and pride. Once master of the manor-house he would answer for nothing, and like a wise man, resolved to spare him the temptation, and Minnie the pain, of seeing a fruitless effort to forget her, in an impossible marriage.

We left Lady Dora dancing with Marmaduke Burton; she did so, but it was spiritless. She had played a game unpleasing to herself, and the success had not been all she hoped for. Tremenhere seemed perfectly indifferent; and when she rejoined Lady Lysson, a freezing manner towards herself, and complete ignorance of Marmaduke Burton's existence, were the things which they met, as she approached, leaning on his arm. To make her still more uncomfortable, she saw Tremenhere and Lord Randolph, as she passed through an inner saloon, laughing and talking with several ladies in the most unconcerned manner possible. At last the dance was proclaimed for which she was engaged to the for-

mer. Had she been behind him and his friend, as they stood unobserved by her in a doorway, watching her, she would not have felt perfectly comfortable. Lord Randolph's face was severe, but in nowise sad, as he said to the other—

"Tremenhere, that woman does not love me—better said, she rather dislikes me. Look at her now. What she has done this night, has opened my eyes to a fact some time suspected, that another motive than even indifferent liking has induced her to accept me. She has some hidden thought, or hidden affection in her heart, and she is struggling with it, for whom I know not; but to me she is indifferent."

"Perhaps you judge hastily," answered Tremenhere. "She has her oddity of temper, doubtless, like all women. Let time, he is my greatest ally, decide every thing; he has means of bringing hidden thought to light, of which our puny imaginings can form no idea. I must leave you; I am engaged this *Schottische* to her ladyship," and, loosening his arm, he crossed over to where she stood with Burton. "May I claim my promised *Schottische?*" he asked, offering an arm.

It was an immense relief for her to leave Burton. She felt many had looked coldly upon her that night. A man is not publicly branded slanderer and coward without the titles clinging to him, more especially among an English set, acquainted with most of the persons implicated in the affair. She expected, made up her mind to a few bitter words, or implied doubts of

her motives in having chosen Burton for her cavalier; but though Tremenhere read her perfectly, he was a sealed book to her, without an effort, or any thing to make her say, "He is playing a part." He was perfectly unembarrassed in his manner—attentive, without being gallant—gentle, without any thing overstrained—full of that quiet, unostentatious wit which charms so much. She had never seen him to more advantage; and every moment she felt his superiority over her own narrow thoughts and mind; and she felt disgusted with the part she had been playing. A word would have made her express all her overtaxed feelings to him, but he gave her no opportunity; she was as an agreeable partner and stranger to him—nothing more. The dance was over; he evinced no desire to leave her, no particular wish to retain her near him; he was the impersonation of a thoroughly idle, indifferent man. As they passed near Lady Lysson, a fan gently touched his arm.

"Amidst more youthful engagements, don't forget you are engaged to me for a *contredanse*," she said· "When a man solicits a thing, I hold it as a point of conscience to make him accomplish it; you have urged me to this folly—I wish to fulfil my kismet."

"I have *not* forgotten it, Lady Lysson; I am counting the moments by my stop-watch."

Lady Dora would have given worlds to hear him speak to her in such a tone. There was a total change in the intonation when he addressed Lady Lysson. From one to the other it seemed to say, "I know you,

and you know me; there exists a freemasonry between us."

And when she stood in the same quadrille with Lord Randolph as partner, she felt it still more keenly. There was a freedom between Tremenhere and Lady Lysson to which she never had attained, though related to him —it was the familiarity of kindred spirits.

She and her mother quitted early. There was a reception at the embassy this same evening, to which they were going. Before doing so, however, they returned home, as it was close at hand, and Lady Dora entered her room to re-arrange her dress, nominally; but, in fact, to collect her shattered nerves by a few moments quiet. Accordingly, dismissing her maid, she sat alone. There was a large mirror opposite the chair where she sat. After surveying herself some time in the distance, she rose, and pacing the room with her proud, queenly air, stood before it, glowing in beauty. Never mirror gave back any thing more richly beautiful than her face; her eyes of dazzling fire—eyes to make a man bow down in wonder before their power—and then the long heavy ringlet of dark chestnut falling across the heaving bosom, to the waist. She surveyed her beauty, not in petty vanity, but in wonder herself, that so perfect a work of nature had not awed that man to love her, and confess his love—how could he resist her? and loving her, as assuredly he *did*. With this thought a grim doubt arose, like a breath passing over that mirror, to shade her beauty—almost unconsciously she dropped on a seat opposite the glass,

which her eyes never quitted; and, as if involuntarily, her hands unclasped the massive bracelets one by one, and laid them on a table beside her. Her maid had placed a bouquet of rich damask roses, looped round the stem with a string of gems, on the side of her beautiful head; for she was not simple in her dress, as Minnie—a more gorgeous style suited her best. Her fingers, though unused to tasks like these, unfastened them, and they dropped from her hand on the floor—all, save the rich dress of antique *moire,* lay around her; and then the girl, unladen by gems, unadorned but by nature, dispirited, broken-hearted, at that nature's bidding covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly; she *felt* he could not love her,—to have been so calm beneath her bitter insult in choosing his cousin's society, she felt how much, how madly she loved him; and the proud Lady Dora sobbed in her bitterness. "An artist's wife! the wife of a nameless, illegitimate man! I would be anything he might become, if he but loved me! But he does!" she cried with sudden energy; "he must! His every word betokened it at once; this one fatal night cannot have made him hate me! He does, and I will prove him! Less would be madness, a longer suspense, the working of that hollow pride which has made me what I am!" When her maid tapped to say, "Lady Ripley was waiting!" she found Lady Dora pale, and with the tears still on her cheek, incapable of aught but an essay at rest on her feverish couch. Her mother was not unused of late to her whims, though she never had carried them to so much excess. It was her own fault. Had she trained

this fair plant otherwise, it would have reared itself in cultured beauty towards heaven; as it was rotten at the root, it would either decay from its own want of power, or trail worthless on the ground, only fit to be torn from its parent earth as a weed—nothing more.

CHAPTER XXI.

NOTHING could adequately pourtray to our readers the unhappy state of all at Gatestone. Juvenal had sunk into a querulous old man; Sylvia's bile had spread itself over all: she silenced any qualms of conscience she might otherwise have felt, by keeping every one as uncomfortable as possible. If she beheld the faintest gleam of forgetfulness passing across the horizon, she immediately drew down the blinds of despair, and threw every one into darkness again, and sorrow; they could not even for a moment lose sight of their loss. If the wind whistled she gave a shiver, and talked of storms at sea, and drowning persons; if the railway whistle, borne on the air for miles, came faintly over Gatestone, she put her handkerchief to a dry eye, and *snivelled* over the recollection thus suddenly recalled to her aching memory, of Gretna Green and its consequences. She was an inexhaustible fund of woe; for when Juvenal had been lured by the kind-hearted Dorcas into some other train of thought, Sylvia would suddenly remind them that this was the anniversary of a day in which Minnie had said, done, worn, or completed something, and consequently she had the house in as miser-

able a state as she could desire; all crept about from pantry to garret in listen shoes, that they might not break in on the general woe; this was another happy invention of Sylvia's, which made the large house as silent as if death were abiding there. Dorcas was lost, indeed, when Mr. Skaife left his curacy for Paris; for, without naming Minnie often, they consoled one another by gentle words, and works of charity accomplished together. Now Dorcas was fain to betake herself principally to her own room; for her means of consoling Juvenal were hourly more severed from her grasp. He became perfectly disconsolate, and rocked to and fro, like one bordering on idiotcy. Of Marmaduke Burton's return he never would listen to; he never should enter *his* house, for his guidance had led him to oppress Minnie, and drive her to desperation. Mrs. Gillett's woe was beyond even the others; for she carried it even into sleep—she was constantly dreaming some dreadful dream. Either she saw Minnie a corpse or in bridal gear; both were bad—the first proved her spirit was unquiet—the second, an unerring sign of death. Now, as Minnie *was* dead, she couldn't die again; consequently, it must be the death of some one at Gatestone—but whose? And she would seek the sympathizing Sylvia, and break into loud prognostications of evil.

"Oh, my dear master! my dear master!" she would cry, wringing her hands; "I know he's going, and then we shall all have to go, and leave the old place; whereas, if any of you had married, and had a boy, or Miss

Minnie either, we might have remained; but her boy went along with her, and I often see a beautiful baby in my sleep, all covered with long hair, like Miss Minnie, sitting on a rock, wringing out the sea-water."

Her description of Minnie was not very correct, but she didn't exactly and literally mean what she said. Poor Gillett certainly looked older by many years; and in proof of how much her memory was affected, she had been seen more than once sitting on the stile in the holly field, without her pattens. The manor-house was desolate—only servants inhabited it; Farmer Weld plodded over his fields in gloom, for now he lost all hope of ever seeing good Madam Tremenhere's son back again.

Skaife had been so solemnly bound down not to betray Minnie's actual existence, that he durst not do so; besides he felt assured that an eventual day of brightness would shine over all, by Tremenhere's and Minnie's reconciliation. He wisely felt that this was too serious an act, after the fatal suspicions on his part, to be risked in its full and perfect self-accomplishment by any interference of friends; when both hearts should be firmly convinced of each other's worth, then they might be safely brought together. But when he told Minnie all the bitter grief her beloved aunt Dorcas felt, her gentle heart consented to a hope which might be held out to alleviate her pain; and this was in the accomplishment of a desire, she had so often expressed, that Minnie's boy even, had been saved.

"Oh!" she often said to Skaife, "I could with time have become reconciled to all. If only I had held her child

in my arms, it would have recalled her to me in all her childish love and kindness, but even this is denied me!"

Skaife accordingly wrote to her, requesting that secresy which he knew would be faithfully kept; and stating that through Mary Burns he had strong hope of one day placing her Minnie's boy in her arms, as he had reason to believe he had been saved from the wreck!"

Minnie would indeed have rejoiced had she seen her aunt's joy; next to seeing herself once more, this was the dearest blessing she could have received. "Minnie's boy!" and as she sat, and hoped and prayed for his coming, the step grew lighter, the eye less dim—even Sylvia's bolts fell more harmlessly around her; and at last this amiable one had the cruelty to accuse her of want of feeling, and "unnatural mirth," because she once saw the ghost of a smile pass over her lip; but not all her indignation could make poor Dorcas hopeless; she felt Skaife would not lightly buoy her up with hopes, to destroy them.

Skaife had indeed a difficult task in hand; he himself feared hurrying events between Tremenhere and Minnie. He dreaded many things; he trembled lest he should become captivated by Lady Dora; and then her flirtation with his cousin Burton, the motive of which Skaife plainly perceived, alarmed him—this, through revenge, might lead to infatuation on Miles's part, and how *then* ever pursuade Minnie that really he only loved herself? and all her future happiness and contentment with him, depended on her strong conviction on this

point. He might easily have effected a meeting, a most joyful one, and reconciliation; but he felt that it must be even more than the first confidence of love—it must be one which had been tried in the fire, proved and purified—and how accomplish this? Her meeting him and Lady Dora in the Bois de Boulogne, had thrown so heavy a doubt over her heart.

One only thing he could imagine, and this was privately to bring her to the studio, and let her own ears hear Miles's words—something must be done, and done quickly.

Some days had passed, and Tremenhere made no effort to see Lady Dora in private; true he called there; it was urged upon him by Lord Randolph and Lady Lysson, who most nobly spoke to him on the subject, without knowing the relationship between them, only knowing of that between Burton and himself.

"Lady Dora is capricious, like most beauties," she said, "my dear Mr. Tremenhere, and, for some extraordinary reason, chooses to receive Mr. Burton's visits contrary to my advice; it will not therefore do, for your own dignity sake, for you to absent yourself from their circle; my doors are open to you at all times; we are only too happy when we can secure you within them; and I strongly advise your visiting Lady Ripley, even more frequently than usual." He could but press the little soft hand held out to him in gratitude to his lips.

Lady Ripley and her daughter had, however, another motive besides pleasure or pique in seeking Marmaduke Burton. They feared him, dreading what he might

utter about Tremenhere's wife, as a relative of theirs. By policy, and seeming kindness towards him, they bound him to silence; for he read their hearts, and never alluded to the unpleasant subject. It mattered little to him *how* he secured their support, that he had it, and as he believed, thus galled Tremenhere, was sufficient. Lady Dora would gladly have cut Burton after the ball where they had met; but crooked policy costs full many a bitter pang, spared to straightforward candour: in concealing their relationship to Tremenhere's wife—they took from her memory that, which might have shielded it from many a cloud.

Lady Dora met Tremenhere. Her heart was now beyond her own controul, had he spoken; but he was attentive, courteous—nothing more by word or look. He had resolved now to let another open Lord Randolph's eyes, for this had been a part of his motive lately; and he saw those eyes *were* extending their power of vision through his cousin, so he left all in other hands. This maddened her. A man may not *speak* his love for many reasons; but he cannot but *look* it, if he love; it is the soul which finds tongue through the eyes. If we might govern or quite controul this, what perfect creatures we should be, *with good intentions.*

Skaife had obtained permission from Miles to visit his studio whenever he pleased, even during his absence, as the latter had a well-chosen library, in which Skaife delighted. He had asked leave so to do, for a half-formed plan in his mind.

One day he brought this to perfection, as far as he could foresee. Tremenhere was going to pass some early hours in the morning at the Louvre. At two o'clock Lady Dora had requested a sitting, and so arranged it that Lord Randolph should accompany her to Tremenhere's, and leave her there for awhile, as he too had an engagement. Lady Dora was independent in all she did, and this day was resolved finally to know if she were beloved or not by Tremenhere. Skaife knew all the latter's appointments, and hours of them. He had made himself master of these facts, and, in accordance with his plan, deemed it better Lady Dora should come in almost immediately after the meeting and re-union of the husband and wife, that no proof further need be wanting to cenvince her of their mutual love; he dreaded this cold-hearted girl.

All this was very nicely planned; but it had to be as well accomplished. It occupied him and Mary Burns for days, in preparing poor Minnie for her visit to Tremenhere's rooms, and when the day arrived her limbs almost refused to support her. With much difficulty he reached her husband's abode with her, and, leaving her in a fiacre, entered the *loge de concièrge*, and inquired whether Tremenhere was within, as a precautionary measure. The man answered in the negative, and handed him the key of the apartment, saying—

"Perhaps, monsieur would like to walk up?"

The next thing to be done was easy of accomplishment. This man, of that most corruptible class, was

open to a little quiet bribery, "Not to tell Monsieur Tremenhere that a lady was in his rooms, as he (Skaife) wished to surprise him."

"*Allez!* monsieur," answered the man, "I see nothing."

And Skaife and Minnie passed in. How her heart and limbs trembled when she entered those rooms where he had so lately been! where he sat and talked, thought of, and *perhaps* so deeply regretted her! She stood in the centre of that studio, and turned round and round, and her pale face and figure, which moved so mechanically, as if afraid of a natural undulation, made her seem like a statue. Skaife had arranged all in his mind before bringing her, and in the space behind the bed in the alcove he concealed her. This room adjoined the studio by one door, and by an opposite from this latter you entered the saloon.

Skaife's idea had been, immediately on Tremenhere's entrance to lead him to speak of Minnie, and she, by creeping from her place of concealment, would be enabled to listen to all—he reserving to himself the task of keeping Miles at his easel, and thus preventing him from entering his bedroom, without giving her sufficient time to conceal herself. All this was admirably arranged; but in such plans there is always the presumption that nothing untoward will occur to mar their perfect completion. Miles entered at one o'clock, as appointed, and after wandering through his apartment, passing close to the half lifeless Minnie, he threw off his coat, and put on the artistic jacket of scarlet, in which he was in the

habit of painting. Minnie through the curtains watched all this, and saw him stand in deep thought a moment, then, passing a weary hand over a wearier brow, he entered his studio, where Skaife stood very pale. He durst not follow him to his bedroom—it would have looked extraordinary his doing so; and so he stood, almost retaining his breath, expecting every moment to hear Minnie shriek forth the other's name—but all passed quietly, and Miles came out, and sat down to touch up Lady Dora's portrait before her arrival. The saloon, we have said, was on the opposite side to the bedroom, and facing Tremenhere's easel; from the saloon you passed into an antechamber, and thence out of the apartment. Skaife had calculated upon having the catastrophe over before Lady Dora's arrival, who would come in, and share the surprise, with Lord Randolph, of finding the long lost wife in her husband's fond arms. He knew that if Tremenhere could be led to speak of her again, as he had done to him, Minnie would no longer doubt the joy her coming would afford him, and at once rush forth. So it might most probably have been all smooth and fair sailing; but they were doomed to meet with some rocks yet, and one of these was the entrance, before the hour appointed, of Lady Dora and Lord Randolph Gray! Skaife, though a most patient man, would assuredly have sworn, but for the colour of his cloth—as it was, he stamped, and coloured violently.

"Trem.," said Lord Randolph, using the abbreviation by which he frequently addressed his friend, "I've brought Lady Dora before the hour, because I have a

particular engagement, and must leave her in your care for half an hour."

Be it said, Lady Ripley imagined Lord Randolph was going to remain the whole time during her sitting, else her ideas of propriety, most justly, would have forbidden allowing her to stop alone in a painter's studio. Lord Randolph had no thought of harm of his friend, when Lady Dora said,—

"I am most anxious to get my sittings over for this Diana; so don't tell mamma you are going to leave me there alone, or she will not allow me to go."

English mothers, perhaps too freely, permit their daughters to walk out *only* accompanied by their intended husbands! French ones say, "The marriage may never take place; 'tis better to avoid bringing a girl's name in question."

Lord Randolph looked at "Diana," and at the fair original, and departed fearless and confiding. Lady Dora trembled with annoyance. Every moment was an hour. She was resolved to have an explanation; and how accomplish this with Skaife present? However, there was a fate to turn all to its will. This latter felt choking with impatience. He could not remain there all the period of the sitting, for nothing could be done until Lady Dora left. So he rose, and entering the bedroom, approached the alcove, where he had placed a chair for Minnie to rest upon; in a low whisper he told her the state of the case, and bade her be patient—all would go well. Be it remembered that, whatever his suspicions of the state of Lady Dora's heart, he had no

proof, he knew nothing of the scarcely ambiguous conversations which took place between them, whenever they met. To collect his thoughts, he deemed it best to go out for a walk; consequently he went, to Lady Dora's great joy, and, pulling the outer door after him, *thought* he closed it, but he did not—it remained ajar.

Lady Dora sat some moments listening, then her impatience began to manifest itself by a movement of the foot. Tremenhere's calmness and cheerful ease drove her mad.

"Mr. Tremenhere," she said at last, "were you not surprised to see me dancing with your—— with Mr. Burton, the other evening?"

"Who—I, Lady Dora?" he asked in extreme surprise, but most placidly; "not in the least—why should I be?"

"Beeause—because, it was strange my doing so."

"Strange! Lady Dora—you use a wrong term, I think; there is nothing strange in a natural action. Mr. Burton, to do him justice, is tall, gentlemanly in appearance, can converse on general topics most agreeable to ladies, dances very well—and what more does a lady require?"

"True—for all this you speak freely and truthfully; but you forget the character of the man—you forget——"

"And pray, my dear Lady Dora, what *has* character to do with a schottische or a polka? Even if a man be a slanderer, a liar, (pardon me the harsh, but truthful word,) and coward, the two first will not prevent his paying just compliments to your beauty, nor

the last make him fail in keeping the time of a *deux temps*, though it *might* that of a hostile meeting, to answer for the two first."

"You are bitter, Mr. Tremenhere."

"Bitter! and towards him?" and he laughed. "No; pardon me, I feel too thorough a contempt for the man to waste bitterness upon him; I reserve that for those who may yet be saved by a little wholesome bark, or quinine, medicinally speaking."

"Expend it then on me. You *must* despise, or condemn me; you cannot approve."

"I do not judge you, Lady Dora; I do but try to hand down to posterity those perfect features of yours, and you sadly distort them," and he laid down his palette. "You are grieved, vexed; has any thing annoyed you? Can I serve you? Pray, command me!"

Minnie had crept from behind the bed. An irresistible impulse impelled her to do so, when she found herself alone, and knew Lady Dora to be unaccompanied by any one, with Tremenhere. And pale, almost lifeless, she leaned against the door, and—oh! most scrupulous reader, forgive the fault!—listened.

"Mr. Tremenhere!" Lady Dora cried, rising hastily in reply to his question, and standing pale, erect, but trembling; "I would ask you,—I—I am in a position of much suffering." She clasped her hands together as if to still her nervous pain. "I would ask you," she uttered, "whether your memory is perfect?"

"In all things, Lady Dora," was the calm reply.

"Do you remember when first we met in Florence?"

"Well—well. I was then a man, comparatively speaking, full of hope; now——"

"And you loved *then*. You (better said) loved me, and I treated your half-avowed affection with scorn; that was pride!" She spoke in hurried confusion.

"True—most true!" he uttered.

"You quitted, believing me a cold, heartless flirt. You met, and married my cousin; was this love, or—pique?"

"I cannot answer, lady, till I know why you ask."

"Since her death" (the words fell in cold awe from her lips) "we have met often, and on each occasion words of implied tenderness fell from your tongue."

Neither heard the almost groan from the sinking woman, leaning against the half-closed door to the bed-room.

"All these I was deaf to, and I accepted Lord Randolph as my future husband. This, too, was pride."

Tremenhere stood looking earnestly at her, as one of her hands nervously played on the back of a chair; but he did not utter a word, though the deep, speaking eye was fixed upon her.

"Man!" she cried at last, stamping her foot with energy; "do you not see how I suffer? Pride—woman's delicacy—all are forgotten. Tremenhere, I love you! For this love I accepted your cousin's attention, hateful as he was to me, to urge you to say the last words; for all but those have been said between us.

Tremenhere, for mercy's sake," she cried impetuously, "do not stand looking on me thus; but say those words at last!"

"Lady Dora," he said, as a deep sigh of heartfelt joy struggled upwards, but his tone was calm and low, and he approached and clasped her hand, "*now* I will answer you. When we met in Florence I could have loved you; I thought I did, till I measured the error afterwards by the intensity of my love for Minnie. When I brought her, a child almost, to my artist's home, who came and upheld that child? who came, and by her presence gave countenance to our love? Did you—did any? True, after a while, a few tardy visits were paid! But when I, fiendlike, drove her by my passions to become a wanderer—who sought her out to cheer and uphold? I blamed you less even then than now; for now you have shewn me how despotic your will can be, when it pleases you to be so! Love you!" he cried, striding across the room and dragging back the curtain before the statue of his wife—"love you, Lady Dora! the cold, heartless woman of the world; with this too looked upon—the marble dream of my adored, my murdered Minnie! Oh no, no!" he added, almost weeping. "By the long, long nights I watched, creating this memory—by her purity, which I now know too late—I scorn you, Lady Dora; and, unmanly as it may seem, have trifled with your semblance of heart, your vanity in short, to open the eyes of a worthy man, too worthy for you—Lord Randolph."

She had stood transfixed by horror, crushed in her

pride, and bending to earth. As he spoke the last words, a heavy fall in the bedroom resounded in their ears. She turned hastily, and in terror gazing at the door, through which he passed in haste. Not a thought of the truth burst upon him as he raised the closely enveloped and veiled figure, fainting on the ground. Placing her on a couch, he hurriedly tore off the bonnet to give her air; as he did so, the long fair hair rolled heavily to the ground, which it swept. He uttered a cry; it was one of pain and fear—for one hurried moment something supernatural crept through his blood and stilled it—then drawing near the couch, as if a spirit lay there, he gently lifted back the fallen hair, and gliding on one knee, gazed with distended eyes on the pale, unconscious face, then, placing his lips near hers, he held his own breath to feel if she breathed. A gentle sigh came over his cheek—with that sigh the truth rushed almost in maddening power over his mind. One loud cry came from his soul; and clasping her in his arms he strained her to his breast, and wild, hysteric sobs burst from his lips, but the eyes were burning and tearless.

"Minnie—Minnie!" he sobbed; "speak to me—my wife—my Minnie, speak to me!"

But though the blue eyes opened, and tried to comprehend all, they were haggard and without speculation. By degrees memory returned; and the first look of terror passing, the languid arms raised above the head on her bosom, and grew in a circle round his neck, and strained him to her heart.

"Miles!" she whispered, "it would have killed me if——" she glanced towards the door. "Let us together thank that unfailing power," she uttered, "which has kept us from sin, and through so much sorrow, in faith and love," and the trembling knees clung to the ground beside where he knelt supporting her; and the eyes, pure as an angel's, looked upwards in prayer, while his arms clasped her, and the speechless lips were pressed on the upraised hands which pleaded for both.

Lady Dora had stood unnoticed in the doorway, when he rushed in. No words can convey an idea of her mingled sensations. At a glance she guessed the truth—'twas Minnie in life. As she stood, a hand touched her arm.

"Lady Dora," said a grave voice, "I was there." He pointed to the saloon. "An open door permitted me to enter, and hear all. I meant not to listen—your words arrested me. Come, let me take you to Lady Ripley's; *this* is no place for you."

She started—gazed on him—then, all her pride coming to her aid, she cried haughtily—

"My lord, I need no counsellor; I can act alone!"

And, hastily throwing on her bonnet and shawl, she quitted the studio. Lord Randolph stood an instant, then, taking up a pencil, wrote on a card, and placed it on the easel:—

"Heaven bless you both! Tremenhere, when you call me to your joy, I shall rejoice with you, indeed!

"RANDOLPH."

Skaife returned, and let himself in with the key which he had taken; but he was not alone. When he quitted the apartment, he hurried off (as men very often do) to a woman for advice; and now he entered with Mary and little Miles, resolved to tell all boldly. But when he arrived all had been said, and, creeping to the bedroom door, he saw Minnie's head on Tremenhere's beating heart, and his other arm clasped round her, as though he still dreaded some power might separate them again. Her face was upturned to his, whose deep, dark eyes were riveted on every look, as she told him all. Skaife moved aside, and Mary crept in. Miles looked up; but he could not for an instant loose his grasp, or move. Mary came quietly on, and round the mother's neck were clasped the arms of her child. Miles started. One glance told him all the truth. Something thrilled through him. It was what he once expressed—"Minnie, I should be jealous of my own child;" but the momentary gleam of that fatal passion left, ere matured, and, folding both in one clasp, his tears unrestrained baptized their re-union of love.

"*You* did this!" he cried, grasping the hands of Skaife and Mary, as he pointed to his boy's portrait in his mother's arms. "Thank you; it was nobly done, and oh, a lovely thought!"

Tremenhere had married Minnie dowerless; but what a rich fortune she laid before him in the proofs of his mother's fame! It was only by degrees Minnie told him all she had suffered—all her vain search for d'Estrées, until aided from on high, whence comes all

for good, though our little minds cannot always see it thus. For without these trials he would never have overcome his jealousy—never have been truly happy. What a room that saloon was of overflowing joy, as Tremenhere, Minnie, Mary, Skaife, and d'Estrées, sat and talked of the past and future! Nor must we forget the child, sleeping on its mother's knee, beneath the loving eyes which watched him!"

Lady Dora and her mother quitted Paris hastily for Switzerland; the former, whose wishes were law, broke off all engagement, as the latter believed, with Lord Randolph, without assigning any cause, and insisted upon leaving France; but the rupture was by mutual consent. Nothing would have induced him to marry her, after the conversation he overheard.

Lady Lysson and himself were the first to call upon and congratulate Tremenhere and his wife. Lord Randolph confided all to her, except, as a feeling of honour, Lady Dora's confession; and, beneath the patronage of Lady Lysson, the young couple became the lions of the place, which they were shortly quitting, to solace those who still mourned Minnie, and whom she wished to surprise so joyfully. And who may depict that happiness? 'Twas like the throwing off of some horrid nightmare, which had oppressed all in a long, heavy sleep. Skaife went before, to prepare them for it.

Dorcas, who had hoped to see the child, held once more to her heart the living mother. Juvenal wept in

childish mirth, as he clasped her in his arms, and sued for pardon. Sylvia, even *then*, could not forbear her old habits, but called to Minnie's mind, again and again, all she had suffered through Miles's treachery, (as she termed it)—imploring her to be cautious for the future, for of course it was in him, and would break out somewhere. She never could expect to be a perfectly happy woman; there were things she *always* must remember, and would do well to do so! She could *never really* love him again, but *perhaps* a re-union was wiser than a separation!

However, despite all, Minnie *did* look happy, for Miles was beside her; and Juvenal shook hands warmly with him, too, and Farmer Weld and buxom Sally.

Marmaduke Burton followed Lady Dora to Switzerland, and both, in utter ignorance of D'Estrée's revelations, from the same motive—revenge towards Tremenhere—entered into a hasty marriage, the bell of which had scarcely rung, when a trumpet resounded, summoning him to yield up the manor-house to the incontestable proof of Miles's legitimacy.

Minnie would fain, if it might have been, have spared her cousin so severe a blow; but the honour of her husband was more to her than all. And when the day of triumph came, and the bells rang out in praise of "good Madam Tremenhere's son"—and the carriage, though plain and unostentatious, drove up with him, his fair smiling wife, and child, one loud shout rang through the air; and, turning from the many, Tremen-

here, with a warm clasp, grasped the hand of Farmer Weld, and presented him to Minnie as the truest friend of his day of shadow.

And Skaife, d'Estrées, all were there; the latter became the tutor nominally of little Miles, and friend of both his doating parents. Mrs. Gillett!—who may speak of her? How she cried, and laughed, and dreamed all sorts of *couleur de rose* dreams; and how she appeared for the first time in her life with a profusion of white satin ribbons in her cap! Mary remained in Paris, happy in the joy of others, which she had helped to create anew; prospering, content, and more, grateful for the peace Heaven had sent to repentance. Spring passed, Summer came, then Autumn, then Christmas; and despite Sylvia's prognostications, "that little Miles was a doomed child, for he looked it!"—the boy throve, and lisped papa and mamma to a large circle of friends round the Christmas fire at the manor-house. Among others were the faces of Lord Randolph, Lady Lysson, Skaife, Juvenal, now rosy and himself again, Dorcas, *not* Sylvia, she had a toothache which did not improve her temper, and therefore stayed at home alone; for Mrs. Gillett presided over some luxuries of her own handiwork, for the table. All were smiling and happy, and in the gallery of family paintings hung "Aurora chasing the Shades of Night," in which Minnie's lovely face shone; for she had indeed brought light to Tremenhere's heart and home. None might have known him; he was as we have never seen him; for, in the midst of the gaiety of those now joyous halls, he looked up, and beheld his

mother's picture smiling on the son who had loved, and suffered so much for her. And when the ringing laughter or falling footsteps were stilled, on the quiet ear sounded the tick-tack, tick-tack, tick-tack, of the old hall clock, now transferred to the manor-house.

Let us end with a moral we have tried to carry out in these pages. If curses like chickens come home to roost, assuredly our good deeds bring nestling joys to our bosom, nor is a cup of cold water cast on the earth.

THE END.

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